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redemption, and the idea of toleration.

These chapters were originally delivered as the Croall Lectures in Edinburgh University in 1948.

## TWO RELIGIONS

# TWO RELIGIONS

*A Comparative Study  
of Some Distinctive Ideas  
and Ideals in  
Hinduism and Christianity  
being the*

CROALL LECTURES  
*for 1948*

by

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LUTTERWORTH PRESS  
LONDON

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*First published 1950*

*Printed in Great Britain by  
Billing and Sons Ltd., Guildford and Esher*



## P R E F A C E

**I**N these Lectures I have not tried to make a comprehensive comparison of Christianity and Hinduism. I have selected for comparison the Hindu and Christian attitudes to a few questions which are very much alive to-day. I have not tried to deal even with these exhaustively. I have done little more than to throw out suggestions which I hope may be found useful by other students, Christian and Hindu.

The Lectures are published almost exactly as they were delivered, with some rearrangement of the material. There are many points at which they might with advantage have been expanded, but any expansion would have meant an increase in the cost of production, and in the price of the book. This I was specially anxious to avoid.

It is impossible to name all to whom I am indebted for help in my studies, in the preparation of the book for the press, and in other ways.

I wish to thank the Croall Lectureship Trustees for encouraging me by this appointment to continue a line of study which has interested me for many years.

I remember with gratitude the Very Rev. Dr. Alexander Martin, formerly Principal of New College, Edinburgh, my honoured teacher and friend, who passed away before these Lectures were written. After my appointment he discussed the whole project with me, and made many valuable suggestions.

I am also deeply indebted to my friend the Rev. Dr. Nicol Macnicol for the help which he has given me over

## PREFACE

many years to a fuller understanding of both Hinduism and Christianity, and of their relationship to each other. I have had the benefit of his counsel on many matters connected with these Lectures, and he has now done me the great service of going carefully through the proofs and drawing my attention to errors which my eye had missed.

Lastly, I would express my gratitude to my wife for her constant help and encouragement, and for the share she has taken in the reading of the proofs.

JOHN McKENZIE.

*Edinburgh,*

*May 1, 1950.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO HINDUISM

A FRIEND of mine once put it to me that those who are prepared to accept a spiritual interpretation of the Universe are coming more and more to realize that the choice has to be made between Christianity and something that in its main features follows the pattern of Hinduism. This may seem to be too strong a statement of the case, though I think to-day more evidence could be adduced in support of his opinion than when he gave it some twenty years ago. Certainly in Christianity and Hinduism we have two attitudes to life and reality, very different from each other but both immensely important. I do not propose in this work to undertake a detailed comparison of them. But I do wish to look at some of the more important points in the teaching and practice of Hinduism in history and in contemporary life, and to do so over against the background of Christian teaching and practice.

#### (1) EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF HINDUISM

I spent most of the years of my working life as a missionary in India. I was led to go there by the belief that God had given to the world a gift of supreme worth in Jesus Christ, and that it was His will that those who had received the gift should make known the Good News—the Gospel—to those who had not heard it. Apart from this determinative consideration there was the influence of a certain amount of knowledge which I had acquired about Indian life and

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thought. When I sailed for India I had left far behind me the impressions which I had gathered of Hinduism in my early days. I seem to remember a confused picture of ascetics submitting themselves to intolerable labours and austerities, pilgrims journeying from shrine to shrine, women immured in zenanas, child marriage and child widowhood, crowds thronging around ornate temples, grotesque many-limbed idols, the Car of Jagannath, caste and untouchability, and a multitude of other things, all jumbled together. Later I had become aware of other features of Hindu life. In contrast to the idea of a people given over to primitive and bizarre religious and social practices, there came the thought of a people immersed in philosophical speculation. I can recall in my undergraduate days hearing it said that in India one might hear even ordinary working men discussing the problems of the Absolute in a way which in the West would be possible only for the philosophical specialist.

I still remember the bewilderment which I felt when I first landed in India and found myself brought into daily contact with different aspects of its many-sided life. One soon discovered that almost any generalizations about India were bound to be false. I have heard Hinduism likened to an impenetrable jungle in which the traveller almost inevitably loses his way. I found that this applied not only to popular Hinduism with its almost endless variety of manners, customs, cults and beliefs, but to Hinduism in its whole range and history. Warren in his Introduction to his *Buddhism in Translations* writes:

After long bothering my head over Sanskrit, I found much more satisfaction when I took up the study of Pali [the language of the Buddhist Scriptures]. For Sanskrit literature is a chaos: Pali is a cosmos. In Sanskrit every fresh work or author seemed a new problem; and as trustworthy Hindu chronology and recorded history are almost nil, and as there are many systems of philosophy,

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orthodox as well as unorthodox, the necessary data for the solution of the problems were usually lacking.<sup>1</sup>

It was a strange and fascinating new world, both social and intellectual, into which one entered. Every day one seemed to discover something new and unexpected in its endlessly variegated life. One formed enriching friendships with men who differed greatly from oneself and from each other in their religious, social and cultural backgrounds. This added zest to one's work, and while it had the effect of helping to change the line of approach to the Hindu mind, it did not radically touch one's motive or purpose. For in all one's experiences one was constantly being kept aware of the depth of human need, of sin and misery that cried out for a Saviour, even if there were "no language but a cry".

I do not think that this meant any sense of superiority. If it did, it was wrong, and also deeply mistaken, for any Christian qualities can be securely possessed only as the possessor knows himself as a debtor. It is not his own righteousness that he seeks to commend to the people of India or to any other people, but Jesus Christ, and what He has done for men. To us this is a familiar truth, which governs, or ought to govern, all our Christian witness. In India it is less readily understood or appreciated, for there is strong antipathy to any attempt to convert people to another faith.

### (2) THE HINDU ATTITUDE TO CONVERSION

Firstly, there is this fact, on which I shall not now dwell, that the Hindu is so habituated to think of religion as expressing itself in a multiplicity of forms that he is prepared to resist absolute claims made in the name of any religion. So Hinduism cannot itself be, in the strict sense, a missionary

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. xix.

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religion. But in qualification of this two things have to be said.

(a) The Hindu social structure has shown a remarkable capacity for growth, not through the conversion of individuals, which is repugnant to Hindu practice, but by the incorporation of whole communities into the system. This process is still going on in some parts of India, where we have seen tribal groups, not through any formal act, but by common consent, coming to be recognized as Hindu castes.

(b) On the intellectual plane, Hindu apologists in our own time have been seeking to propagate in the West the philosophico-theological ideas of the Vedānta, and in this they have had the co-operation of Western writers, some of whom have not hesitated to transfer to this system of thought the old and honourable designation of *Philosophia Perennis*.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, there is a matter of far-reaching practical importance to which I wish to give a little more detailed consideration. I may introduce it by mentioning an experience which I had in my second year in India. I then spent some time in a rural district of the Deccan, and there I used to go out in the early mornings on preaching expeditions to the villages with two evangelists. I recall how one morning after a group of peasants had listened to the evangelists' message, an old man turned to his neighbour and asked what it was all about. The answer was: "He has been talking about the *sarkāri guru* (the Government religious teacher)." It was a naïve remark made by a very simple man. But it shed a flood of light on what many simple people thought about the Christian message. More than that, I discovered that it was not essentially different from

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., *The Perennial Philosophy*, by Aldous Huxley; and *Vedānta for the Western World*, edited by Christopher Isherwood.



what many highly educated people thought about it. I became very familiar with the belief that the missionary movement was nothing more than the ecclesiastical wing of the imperialistic movement. I found that it was expected that the Indian Christian would imitate the European in dress and social customs, and that above all he would be loyal to the Government. This was believed to be in accordance with the policy of the missionaries. This or that particular missionary or Indian Christian might be exempted from the general charge which was brought against the movement. But as to its general intention and tendency many of my Hindu friends had no doubt whatsoever.

One could not live and work among the educated classes in India without discovering very quickly how great a reverence many of them had for Jesus Christ, and at the same time how little disposition they showed to recognize the Church as the Society of His disciples. There have been ardent evangelists who have attributed their refusal to join the Church to lack of moral courage. This may be true of some, but not of the majority. I was continually being told by Indian students that they, as Orientals, understood Christ as we Westerners were incapable of doing, and this belief they held with intense sincerity.

Further, one was continually meeting historically-minded Indians who had been giving their attention to the history of the Church, and those of weaker capacity were having selected portions of it broken up for them by bodies like the Rationalist Press Association. They discovered that both in the expansion of the Church and in its activities in so-called Christian lands things had been done which flagrantly violated the spirit of Christ. They were not favourably impressed, for example, by Constantine or by the circumstances under which he made Christianity the official religion

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of the Roman Empire; still less by the manner in which many other nations were led to "adopt" the Christian faith. They gave due attention to facts such as those summarized by Mr. H. A. L. Fisher in the following sentence:

The Goths, the Franks, the Saxons, the Scandinavians went over to Christianity, not as individuals directed by an inner light, but as peoples subject to mass suggestion and under the direction of political chiefs.<sup>1</sup>

They were impressed also by the way in which in Western lands the functions of Church and State were often confused, or the Church used as a pawn in the service of political ends. They were shocked by the persecutions which the Church initiated or abetted. They have the memory in India itself of the Portuguese invasion at the end of the fifteenth century, and the establishment of a Church by means less than doubtfully Christian, and its maintenance with the help of the Inquisition. They point to the failure of Christianity in the lands which have adopted it to prevent wars, social injustice, and grave personal misconduct. I need not extend the list. It is possible to write the history of the Christian Church with all the emphasis on the offensive features in its record and it is not to be wondered at that so many Indians have so read it.

But Christianity would not have survived as a religion if this had been the whole truth. Down through the centuries there was in the Church a flame of true Christian piety and Christian ethical purpose, which sometimes burned low, but which was never extinguished. It was this flame, burning in the lives of men and women, some of them great saints, and still more of them persons so simple that no memorial of their name has been preserved, that wrought the real extension of the Church, accomplishing what Constantine and

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Europe*, p. 186.

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Clovis and Charlemagne and Vladimir were incapable of doing. The question for India and for the world is whether the blunders and the crimes which have disfigured the life of the Church have unfitted her for being the instrument of His gracious purposes to men? Must a new vehicle be created, or is any vehicle unnecessary?

### (3) PROTESTANTISM AND MISSIONS

We have had the Reformation, and I for one am satisfied that the Church gained by shedding much that had clogged its life in pre-Reformation times and by directing the eyes of Christians to the Scriptures, the great fountain-head of Christian truth. I admit there was loss as well as gain. One of the great losses was the obscuration for a time of the sense of what was involved in the possession of a faith which was intended for all men. Here we must beware of exaggeration, for it must not be supposed that at any time this sense of mission permeated the whole membership of the Church. When the call came

To chase these pagans in those holy fields,  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet  
Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd  
For our advantage on the bitter cross,

whole nations might be moved. But the call to present the Gospel of love in word and action has always appealed to a much smaller circle. The tragedy was that the leading Reformers seem to have largely lost the sense of mission to the non-Christian world. Luther used language about Turks and Jews that can only be described as thoroughly un-Christian: as, for example, in his *Exhortation to Prayer against the Turks*, in which he described them as a scourge of God, and urged his countrymen to make war on them as God commanded. There was no thought of passing on the

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good news to them. It is very curious that with all his interest in Pauline thought he should have given so little attention to what lay at the very heart of St. Paul's life, without reference to which his theology cannot be rightly understood, viz., the sense that he was called to be an apostle.

Turning to Calvin, one cannot but be struck by the way in which he takes up the great passages in the New Testament in which the call to carry the Gospel to the world is most clearly set forth, and finds in them matter for doctrine but not for action. One thinks of his treatment of the Great Commission in the form in which it is given in Matthew and in Mark, and of such great passages as John 3: 16. And there is a curiously revealing passage in the third Book of the *Institutes*, where he discusses Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, as the officers of the Church (Eph. 4: 11); and where he says of the first three of these:

These three functions were not instituted in the Church to be perpetual, but only to endure so long as churches were to be formed where none previously existed, or at least where churches were to be transferred from Moses to Christ; although I deny not that afterward God occasionally raised up Apostles, or at least Evangelists, in their stead, as has been done in our time. For such were needed to bring back the Church from the revolt of Antichrist. The office I nevertheless call extraordinary, because it has no place in churches duly constituted.<sup>1</sup>

In short, the only function of apostles or evangelists in his own day was the bringing to the Reformed faith of those who had been in allegiance to the Pope.

On the practical side, it is significant that from the beginning of their intercourse with India the Portuguese put in the forefront of their plans the extension of the

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, iii, 61 f.

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Church. The Dutch East India Company was instructed in its Charter (1602) to care for the Heathen in its possessions, but it seems that very little spirit was put into this work. The English East India Company was founded for purely commercial purposes, but it had its chaplains, and it is interesting to find in the Charter of William III the following provision :

Ministers . . . shall apply themselves to learn the native language of the country where they shall reside, the better to enable them to instruct the Gentoos that shall be the servants or slaves of the same Company, or of their agents, in the Protestant religion.

### (4) THE MODERN MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

But Protestant missionary activity in these ways led to very little. The real missionary movement had other roots. It was to groups which had little share either in the official direction of Church activities, or in the direction of Government or of commerce, that the sense of a call to spread the Gospel first came: to the Puritans who were brought into contact with American Indians in New England, and to their friends in England: to Pietists in Germany and Denmark, who in the beginning of the eighteenth century were moved to open a Mission in South India: and to the Moravian Church, which sent missionaries to various parts of the world. In Scotland from the seventeenth century onwards there began to appear signs of interest in the carrying of the Gospel to the distant parts of the earth.

These were but trickling streams. The flood of missionary enthusiasm which began to flow in England at the close of the eighteenth century was one of the expressions of the great Evangelical movement. Throughout that century there had come to individuals and to groups in England an overmastering sense of their duty to bring the Gospel to

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those who were without. Their attention was drawn, in the first place, to those who were without Christ in their own land. The greatest of all the evangelical leaders, John Wesley, felt led by God to take the world as his parish, and though he had in his early ministry some experience of work among non-Christians, he found while still young a task in his own country that absorbed most of his energies for the rest of his life.

It was late in the century when a similar concern for non-Christians in other lands began to lay effective hold on the hearts of Christian people. It began with individuals like William Carey and his friends. Their influence spread rapidly to groups in all the churches, so that with the close of the eighteenth century we see the beginning of a new era of missionary activity. There was indifference in many quarters. There was opposition on the part of the East India Company and of Government. There was even active opposition on the part of many Church leaders. Indifference was nothing new, but within the Church it seems to have been reserved for Protestants to try to justify theoretically the shutting up of the Kingdom of God. There was the indecent ridicule which Sydney Smith poured on Carey and his work. There were the arguments used by leaders of the Church to show that the blessings of civilization should be first presented to non-Christian peoples before any attempt was made to offer them the Gospel. There was lastly the kind of objection to the whole missionary enterprise which arose from gross misunderstanding of God's ways with men. This found its crudest expression in the words of an old Baptist minister to the youthful Carey: "Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marshman, *The Story of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, p. 8.

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The belief is still not uncommon that the chief motive to missionary work has been a fanatical conviction that those who die without accepting Christ, even if they have never heard of Him, are doomed to the pains of hell through all eternity. There doubtless were people in the early days who were moved by such a motive, and there continued to be such. Dr. Norman Macleod tells of a group of missionaries of another denomination whom he met in India in 1867. One of them said to him: "I go to a village, sit down, and tell them they must live after death, and for ever be in hell or heaven, and then tell them how to get out of hell by Jesus Christ." It sounds very simple, but I cannot conceive that he got many Hindus to believe him. In any case the prospect of reward or punishment alone can make but little contribution to the upbuilding of the Church of Christ. Carey himself was first moved to think of the spiritual needs of people beyond his own land by reading the story of Captain Cook's voyages, and discovering there how great was the degradation in which many people lived. He believed that Jesus Christ, who died for all men, provided the sovereign remedy for all human ills. This I believe to be fairly normal. The early missionaries were much more sure than many modern missionaries that the Gospel was to be identified with a closely integrated system of doctrine. They did not teach that mere intellectual assent to this meant salvation, but they did teach that Christ sought submission to Himself of intellect, heart and will. They did not expect of their simplest converts the assimilation of an elaborate system of theology, but they did seek of them, in forms differing according to their denominational practice, a profession of dependence on Christ alone and on His atoning sacrifice. This meant a repudiation of every other religious authority, whether of priest or scripture, of caste, creed or ceremony. The authority

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of Christ was absolute, and it could be shared with none other.

There is another thing about the religious outlook of the early missionaries which arrests attention. Social wrongs were to them mainly symptoms of deep religious need. At the beginning of their enterprise it was with the Godward aspect of their faith that they were primarily—indeed almost exclusively—concerned. In more recent times it has become common for missionary propagandists and apologists to lay emphasis on the public benefits which the Gospel brings with it, in social righteousness and social justice, in better customs and ways of life. The earlier missionaries were by no means unaware of the importance of these things; they were deeply moved by them; but when they sought to relate their message to the life of the people among whom they worked, what first caught their attention was practices, such as idolatry, which they conceived as being directly dishonouring to God, and with their effect on the lives of individuals. Their business was under God to make the tree good, to turn the hearts of men to God.

But there were glaring public moral and social evils to which they could not close their eyes. In India they not only took a stand against some of these evils, but they gave a lead to reforming Hindus who shared their concern. In particular, they took up some of the most shameful evils affecting the lives of women and children. It was on the recommendation of Carey that Government suppressed the practice of sacrificing children at the annual festival at Gunga Sagor. The missionaries also took the lead in the movement which led to the suppression of *suttee*. This practice had for centuries outraged the moral sense of Christians and of many others. It is told that the Emperor Akbar was so moved by the representations of the Jesuits



who came to his court that he refused thenceforth to attend a *suttee*, incurring thereby the deep resentment of the Brāhmans. But the practice continued till it was suppressed by Lord William Bentinck in 1829. It is important to observe, however, that the intervention of the missionaries in matters of this sort was exceptional. They were not concerned with the mere reform of manners, still less with the invocation of the powers of Government to this end. They were concerned with bringing men to "a saving knowledge of God".

#### (5) HINDU REACTIONS

From all accounts, Hinduism had in those days touched a very low level both morally and intellectually. India was custom-ridden, and many of the customs were bad. There were no great religious teachers with a message capable of lifting the minds of ordinary people above the minutiae of ceremonial requirements or the puerilities of popular religious belief and practice. One of the effects of the preaching of the early missionaries was to "stab awake" many of the finest souls of the time. In their hearts there was created a great revulsion against the things that disfigured the Hinduism in which they had been brought up. There were those who abandoned it and accepted the Christian faith and the Christian way of life. Others were attracted by much that they saw in Christianity, above all by the personality of Jesus, and in some degree by the spiritual and ethical qualities which they found in the lives of some of His professed followers; but they were not convinced of the need for making a radical break with their ancestral religion, and were led to seek a *via media*.

Orthodox Hinduism continued to find many defenders, but for long these were men whose capacity for the function

of defence was not of the highest. When, later, abler apologiæ began to appear, there was sometimes a lack of conviction behind them. Here is an extract from a little book published as late as 1850:

The ancient and noble edifice of Hinduism is now on all sides stoutly assailed by the adherents of a hostile faith; and we are filled with dismay at finding that there is also treason within. No wonder that the venerable structure is already nodding to its fall. I, by means of this little book, seek to prop up the building; but when its size and its ruinous state is considered, what hope is there that such a feeble prop can prevent its fall? But, as in the case of one who is labouring under a complication of diseases, and who evidently must soon die, we continue even unto death to administer medicines, even so do I minister to the decaying system of Hinduism. Hinduism is sick unto death; I am fully persuaded that it must perish. Still, while life remains, let us minister to it as best we can.<sup>1</sup>

Actually this was not the end but a new beginning. In the course of the nineteenth century great and significant developments took place along two lines which were closely interrelated. On the one hand there was awakened in the West a scholarly interest in the religions of the East among a large group of scholars, of whom the most outstanding was Max Müller. Some have regarded the publication of the translations of the Sacred Books of the East under his editorship as marking an epoch not only in the understanding of the religions of the East, but in the history of religion itself. On the other hand, there began to take place concurrently important reforming movements within Hinduism itself. These movements were in part stimulated by Christian influence, sometimes directly and sometimes by way of reaction. They owed much to the scholarly study of the ancient Scriptures of India, and in turn they provided the motive to further study.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Memoir of the Rev. Robert Nesbit*, pp. 309 f.

## THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO HINDUISM

A brilliant account of the most important of these movements is given in the late Dr. J. N. Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*. Some of them are of great interest and significance with reference to the question whether India may not be able to provide a substitute for, or an adaptation of, the Christian religion, which may more adequately satisfy the needs of her own people than the Christianity of the Church. From both the Indian and the Christian sides answers have been given to this question. I shall make no attempt to deal with these in a comprehensive way, but it may be not without profit to look briefly first at what I believe to have been the most important effort from the Indian side to face the issues raised by the missionaries, and second at a modern attempt to accommodate the Christian message to the Indian mind.

### (6) THE *Brāhma Samāj*

I regard the *Brāhma Samāj* as the most important religious movement which originated in the early nineteenth century, not because of the number of people who were drawn into it, but because it was the most serious attempt to meet the moral and religious challenge of Christianity otherwise than by yielding to it. The first leader of the movement was Raja Rammohun Roy. Even before he came to know much about the Christian religion he had become deeply dissatisfied with many things in the Hinduism which he saw about him, particularly with the idolatrous and immoral practices which were common. But he was profoundly influenced by a study of the New Testament and by association with missionaries. In 1820 he published a work entitled *The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Later he gave active encouragement and support to Duff in the initiation of his great scheme of Christian education. But

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from the beginning he sought to combine the things which he valued in Christianity with elements which he found in Hinduism. The *Brāhma Samāj*, which he founded, and in which he gathered around him a group of pure and lofty-minded souls like himself, was based on a theistic faith, and it was animated by the highest moral ideals. He frankly acknowledged his debt to the Gospels, but he claimed that the same pure religion and morality were to be found in the Hindu Scriptures. He encountered bitter opposition from orthodox Hindus, but the movement which he initiated was essentially a movement within Hinduism.

Rammohun Roy was succeeded in the leadership of the *Samāj* by Devendranath Tagore, the father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore. He went far beyond his predecessor in his profession of dependence on Hindu sources for his religion. Unlike him, he denied that India had anything to learn from Christianity, and he actively opposed the work of the missionaries. He was the real organizer of the *Samāj*, and he gave it a "Covenant" and a text-book of devotion and morals. He claimed that his religion was based exclusively on the ancient Hindu Scriptures; but he repudiated the monism of the Vedānta philosophy, and this meant a re-interpretation of the Upanishads. He took his stand firmly on the theistic position. "If the worshipper and the object of worship become one, then how can there be any worship?" he asked. The Scriptures were to be interpreted by the "pure unsophisticated heart". "Those sayings which disagreed with the heart we could not accept."<sup>1</sup> But how was the heart itself instructed? His son, Satyendranath Tagore, says:

It is singular that the one field of religious inspiration which was foreign to him was the Hebrew Scriptures. He was never known to

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of Devendranath Tagore*, p. 161.

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quote the Bible, nor do we find any allusion to Christ or His sayings in his sermons.<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that he never consciously used Christian expressions or ideas, indeed that he strove to keep his mind free from their influence. But one cannot avoid the impression that the influence of Christianity upon him was much stronger than he realized, indeed that his whole thinking was shot through and through with Christian ideas. We see it in particular passages in his speeches and writings, as for example, the following taken from a sermon on "The Revelation of God in the Human Soul":

Now we see through a glass darkly, but a time will come when the Sun of Righteousness will shine perpetually over the inner being, and we shall behold Him face to face without a break. . . . We need not be anxious about the riches we acquire, or the honour or distinction or fame we attain. Calculate how much you have hoarded of that treasure which is imperishable. You attain in this life all you covet when you gain this treasure.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not only in occasional passages that we seem to hear echoes of the Christian Scriptures. His theism was much nearer to Christianity than was that of Rammohun Roy, who has been described as rather a deist than a theist, the Christian influences which were operative upon him being modified by other influences, notably those of European and Mohammedan rationalism. Devendranath came much nearer to the Christian thought of God, whose mercy and loving-kindness he dwelt upon continually. In fellowship with Him man found his true being.

After death the body will be left here; but, united in this spiritual union, the soul shall dwell with the Soul Supreme for ever.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

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Further, the ethic which he commended was very near to the Christian.

He who adores God and loves man is a saint.<sup>1</sup>

I am not trying to write a history of the *Brāhma Samāj*, but to draw attention to it as offering to India an alternative to Christianity. I shall pass over the whole story of its later development and of the divisions and ramifications which appeared in it. But it is of interest to note that the theistic tradition has been continued to our own day, and by none has it been maintained more uncompromisingly than by Rabindranath Tagore. Again and again in his writings he repudiated the Vedānta identification of the subject and the object in religion, the attempt "to merge completely the personal self in an impersonal entity which is without any quality or definition". God was to him "an infinite personality in whom the subject and object are perfectly reconciled". He described his religion as a "poet's religion". He disowned all capacity for theological discussion, saying that all that he felt about religion was from vision and not from knowledge. He was satisfied that at the heart of the Universe is the love of God, in union with whom the personality of the individual is not lost but completed and fulfilled. There is a "hall of union,"

where dwells the Lover in the heart of existence. When a man reaches it he at once realizes that he has come to Truth, to immortality, and he is glad with a gladness which is an end, and yet which has no end.<sup>2</sup>

This may be poetry, but it is the kind of poetry that contains more truth than much solemn prose. It is the kind of poetry of which philosophy must take account if it would

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religion of Man*, Rabindranath Tagore, pp. 106 f.

build on the solid rock of experience and not in the air. Tagore was content to leave it at that, but he was not content that what he saw in his poet's vision should be in any way depreciated. He would not have it patronisingly treated as a lower view of reality, having its own beauty and value, but transcended by the higher insight of the Vedānta philosophy. Where I think he does err, however, is in his sincere conviction that he derived all this from Hindu sources. In *The Religion of Man* he makes much of the songs of the Bauls, a wandering Bengali sect, who have no images, temples, Scriptures or ceremonials, but to whom the goal of spiritual attainment is a bond of union between the finite and the infinite soul, from which there can be no *mukti*, because love is ultimate. He doubtless derived much inspiration from them and from other Hindu sources, but though he himself may not have realized it, he, like his father, owed even more to Christian influence.

I have dwelt for a little on this modern theistic movement because it began as a reaction from Christian teaching, and because the question has inevitably been raised whether it has not given India a religion so spiritual and an ethic so pure that the Christian has nothing further to pass on to those who practise them. This is a very important question, to which I shall not attempt to give a direct answer at this stage. The general lines that the answer would take would be that the Christian Gospel is the good news of something that God has done in history—that He has “visited and redeemed His people”; that these mighty acts of God both guarantee His love and give it its special character; that the good news is not of some good thing to be enjoyed by individuals in isolation but in the fellowship of the Church. Therefore no belief in the personality of God, no conviction of His love, and no theistic devotional practices can take the place of

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full Christian belief and practice. Between mere theism and Christian theism there is a gulf, in the attempt to bridge which much skill has been employed, but always unsuccessfully.

### (7) SUGGESTIONS FOR ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY

In my early days in India there were keen young missionaries who, moved by a sense of the greatness of India's religious heritage, were seeking not to find a substitute for the Christian religion but an easy transition to it from Hinduism. They advocated the Indianizing of forms of worship, of Church organization, of Church architecture, and the like. Some of them even suggested that selected readings from the Hindu Scriptures might take the place of the Old Testament lessons in public worship. Some of their suggestions were good; others were the outcome of misunderstanding of the real nature of Christianity and Hinduism, and of their relation to each other. As regards the Indianizing of the externals and non-essentials of Christianity, it has to be remembered that no Westerner can hopefully undertake this work. The most that he can do is to beware of confusing what is merely Western in thought and life with what is essentially Christian. It must be left to Indian people to discover what is the characteristically Indian expression of the Christian religion.

It may be of interest to note that this problem of adjustment is not new. One of the great figures in the history of Roman Catholic Missions is Robert de Nobili, who in 1606 founded the Madura Mission. In order to win the Brāhmins he adopted the Hindu way of life, observing Brāhman customs in matters of food and drink and dress, even wearing on his forehead a distinctive marking. He produced a religious work in Sanskrit, which he presented to the people



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as the Fifth Veda. The whole story of his work and influence is fascinating and instructive. It led to much controversy, for the settlement of which the authority of the Pope was invoked. De Nobili's most extravagant practices were not perpetuated, but the recognition which he and his fellow-Jesuits extended to caste was continued, and in our day it has been a source of much embarrassment to Church authorities in parts of South India. Yet a modern Jesuit has written of caste as being a custom which should be allowed in the Church as having nothing in common with religion, or as capable of being easily separated from it.<sup>1</sup>

The most thoroughgoing attempt in modern times from the side of Western Protestantism to re-direct missionary effort in relation to Hindu thought and practice was that made by an American Laymen's Commission, which visited the lands of the East during the years 1930 to 1932. Here is the Commission's statement of the aim of Missions:

The message presents a way of life and thinking which the Christian conceives not as his way alone, but as a way for all men. It is a way which may enter without violence the texture of their living and transform it from within. As Christianity shares this faith with men of all faiths, they become changed into the same substance. The names which now separate them lose their divisive meaning; and there need be no loss of the historic thread of devotion which unites each to its own origins and inspirations.<sup>2</sup>

The Commission professed to believe in the uniqueness of Christianity. It declared that "in respect of its theology and ethics Christianity has many doctrines in common with other religions, yet no other religion has the same group of doctrines". Indeed it would be difficult for Christianity to claim priority or uniqueness in regard to any general

<sup>1</sup> *Im Kampfe mit der Zaubervelt des Hinduismus*, Vâth, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Rethinking Missions*, p. 58.

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principle. "What is true belongs, in its nature, to the human mind everywhere."

From this treasury of thought, however, Christianity proffers a selection which is unique. The principle of selection is its own peculiar character: its individuality lies in the way in which it assembles and proportions these truths, and lends to them clarity, certainty, exemplification and therefore power.<sup>1</sup>

The assumption is that there are certain "universal elements of religion", eternal truths, which lie deeper than the truths of any particular religion, and that one of the permanent functions of the Christian missionary is the promotion of world unity through the spread of these universal elements. The analogy of the aim and methods of the scientific worker seems to have exercised a considerable influence over the minds of the commissioners. "The relation between religions," it is stated, "must take increasingly hereafter the form of a common search for truth."<sup>2</sup>

The Report was published in America with the title *Rethinking Missions*, and for a brief period it received a considerable degree of attention, notably in secular circles where there has usually been little interest in missionary work. It contained much that was true and good, and every understanding Christian would agree with what is said about the need for a sympathetic approach to the minds of non-Christians, for patient study of their religion and culture, for that humility of mind which should ever lead the true Christian to be prepared to receive from others as well as to give to them. But the commissioners seem to have confused two things which should have been kept separate for the purposes for which their enquiry was undertaken, the re-thinking of the presentation of the Christian message to non-Christians and the re-thinking of Christianity itself. In

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

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their practical proposals they offered suggestions for the presentation to the world of something different from what Christians have commonly understood Christianity to be.

I think their fundamental error lay in their conception of the content of the Christian message as a selection of truths taken from a fund of truth which belongs to the human mind everywhere. It is not a selection, however unique, of such truths. It is not a synthetic product, even if the determinative element in the synthesis be the thought of the eternal love of God. It is the good news of God's love in action. The Christian knows himself as not simply a seeker after God, who may hope to find among the various religions of the world a little here and a little there of the treasure for which he seeks. There is a very true sense in which the Christian must always be a seeker, for none has ever made more than limited progress in the exploration of the wealth which God offers him. But far more important than our search for God and for the riches that are in Him is the fact that God has sought us and given to us a gift of inestimable worth, which is there, whether we have appropriated it or not. We preach not ourselves but Christ.

The problem which the Laymen's Commission sought to solve was faced nearly forty years ago by the late Dr. J. N. Farquhar with no less sympathy and with an incomparably greater scholarly understanding of Hinduism, and the results were presented in *The Crown of Hinduism*. To some minds the title has suggested that his solution was similar to, if not identical with, theirs. Actually what he sought to do was to demonstrate that the essential characteristics of Hindu thought and practice were connected with needs and aspirations which could find their true fulfilment only in Christ. That nothing was further from his mind than any kind of syncretism is shown by his own words:

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Thus, when Jesus says, "Follow me," He means to say: "Follow me in the surrender of everything; follow me, if need be, even to the Cross." The dying to all that impedes the work of God in the soul includes for the Hindu a dying to Hinduism, which is no easy or pleasant duty.<sup>1</sup>

### (8) THE "EITHER-OR"

My own conviction is that it is not possible to merge Christianity in Hinduism or Hinduism in Christianity, or to synthesize them in some higher unity. Schopenhauer discovered that this was true of philosophical Hinduism many years ago, and one of his sentences regarding the Upanishads has been often quoted:

How thoroughly is the mind here washed clean of all early engrafted Jewish superstitions, and of all philosophy that cringes before these superstitions.<sup>2</sup>

He was right at least in his recognition of the fact that we are faced with an "Either-Or". We do no service to either religion by trying to pretend that it is otherwise. It is true there are other strains in Hinduism than the philosophical, and in some of them we shall find what appear to be closer affinities with Christianity. These are matter for honest and reverent study.

In any comparison that we may make it is important that we should remember that it is not a matter of appraising the relative merits of adherents of the two religions. Both have their saints and great teachers, from whom we cannot withhold admiration. Still less is it a case of comparing the ideals of one religion with the achievements of those who profess the other. This belongs to the lower levels of religious controversy. No comparison can be worth anything that is divorced from an effort after sympathetic understanding. It is in this spirit that the present study has been undertaken.

<sup>1</sup> *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *The Upanishads* (S.B.E.), Introduction, p. lxi.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SOCIAL ORDER

THE question, What is Hinduism? is not easy to answer briefly. It is one of the world's great religions, but even more characteristically it is a social system. The Hindu social structure is elaborate and highly integrated, and the place of each individual in it is very definitely fixed. I am thinking not primarily of the joint family or the self-contained village community. These are found in other old civilizations. Indian society has in addition to these the caste system. To be a Hindu is to be in caste—that is, to have the position and privileges or disabilities which belong to membership of the group into which one was born. For caste is strictly hereditary. One's place in the social organism is predetermined. There is no way by which one can pass from one caste to another, nor is there any way by which one who is not born a Hindu can become one. No profession of faith, no manifestation of spiritual gifts, no moral attainment, has the slightest value as a qualification for admission to the Hindu fold or to any Hindu caste. It is true there are some modern Hindus who profess to be able to admit converts, but the weight of both traditional and popular authority is against them. It is worthy of note also that one can cease to be a Hindu only by being excommunicated from one's caste. The ground for excommunication is always breach of caste rules. These relate not primarily to religious belief or moral practice—indeed not directly to these at all—but to the whole complex of ritual and ceremonial prescribed for the various events of life, and of restrictions and injunctions in the matter of food, marriage, social intercourse and the like.

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I have stated this baldly, and it requires much elaboration and explanation. But if we are going to understand Hinduism at all we must be clear about this feature, which distinguishes it from all the other great religions. Every religion has its own important and far-reaching social implications. Its adherents are bound together by ties that serve to make of them a community apart. But the essential thing at the heart of every other great religion is some conviction about reality which anyone may share. By some form of assent to this conviction and by some undertaking to seek to follow the way of life which it implies, anyone may qualify for admission to the group. We in the West have become accustomed to think of this as the thing which marks off the higher religions from the purely tribal cults of primitive peoples; that they are concerned with truth and reality transcending all racial and tribal distinctions. We have become accustomed to think of ourselves as free to choose our religion in accordance with our personal convictions. We probably have known people who in the exercise of this freedom have become Mohammedans or Buddhists, and it may surprise most people to be told that by no belief in Hindu doctrine and by no sympathy with Hindu ideals and ways of life can they qualify for admission to the Hindu community.

### (1) CASTE

I have spoken of caste as the distinctive feature of Hinduism. Both the name and that which it connotes have histories. The word *caste* is not indigenous, but is derived from a word *casta*, meaning lineage, which was imported by the Portuguese. Apologists for Hinduism have sometimes complained that the use of a Portuguese word has given a misleading impression of the essential nature of the institution. Actually whatever Portuguese associations the word

may once have had, these have been forgotten, and we now know it as the designation of something distinctively Hindu. The Sanskrit term is *jāti*. Some hold that this system with its elaborated differentiation of communities is quite different from the ancient Hindu system of *varṇa*, or colour, with its much simpler differentiation.<sup>1</sup> The history of caste is long, uncertain, and in some points highly controversial. Fortunately it is not necessary for us to go far beyond the limits of ascertained historical fact.

From early times Indian society fell into classes. In the Tenth and latest Book of the *Rig Veda* these are declared to be four, and they are said to have been separately created as the outcome of the sacrifice of Purusha:

The Brāhman was his mouth; the Rājanya was made from his arms; the being called Vaiśya was his thighs; and the Śūdra was produced from his feet.<sup>2</sup>

This was not the caste system. By the act of God the four classes, *varṇas*, were brought into being, but there is no evidence of the sharp hereditary divisions which characterize caste. We have a still earlier picture of a community divided into three groups: the priests, the rulers and warriors, and the workers and merchants. By the time of the completion of the Tenth Book of the *Rig Veda* there had been added the fourth class of menial workers, who have all along continued to occupy a markedly lower status. There is nothing unusual about this, particularly if it be true, as some scholars maintain, that in the early days one's position was not hereditarily determined, but that there was at least some intermarriage and a certain amount of movement from one class to another in accordance with the character or aptitude of the individual. But as time passed the separation of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Caste in India*, Hutton, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Rig Veda*, X, 90, 12.

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classes became increasingly sharp, and in the end the hereditary principle became absolutely determinative. When this happened is uncertain. In the *Dharma-Śāstras*, or Law Books, dating back to the sixth century B.C., there are references to the possibility of an individual's attaining, as the result of great merit, a higher position than that of the *varṇa* into which he was born, but it seems to be clearly implied that this was very exceptional and that heredity was now the dominating fact. Further, in the Law Books we have the functions of the different *varṇas* and their relative religious and social authority and dignity set forth.

But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet.

To Brāhmanas he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).

The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures;

The Vaiśya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money and to cultivate land.

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Śūdra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes.<sup>1</sup>

There is accordingly a graded order. The three twice-born *varṇas* are permitted to study the Veda, but the Brāhman alone to teach it. He is "the lord of all *varṇas*".<sup>2</sup> The Śūdra at the other end of the scale "has one birth only", being ineligible for the study of the Veda and the performance of the higher spiritual functions and for investiture with the sacred thread. In "times of distress" members of the different castes may follow other occupations, but of kinds and under conditions that are carefully defined.

We have here a framework which was given greater rigidity as time passed. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is based on the

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws of Manu*, I, 87-91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 3.



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story of Arjuna's unwillingness to fight, shrinking from the sin of destroying a stock, and causing the loss of its ancient Laws.

When Lawlessness comes upon it, O Kṛishṇa, the women of the stock fall to sin; and from the women's sinning, O thou of Vṛishṇi's race, castes become confounded.<sup>1</sup>

Kṛishṇa assures Arjuna that it is his duty to fight in obedience to his own Law, and he lays down the famous principle:

There is more happiness in doing one's own Law without excellence than in doing another's Law well. It is happier to die in one's own Law; another's Law brings dread.<sup>2</sup>

The whole conception of *dharma* was given a special character and significance by its association with the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra* (or transmigration). The origin of these doctrines is obscure, but in the form which they ultimately took they lay down the lines of individual destiny. The principle underlying *karma* is that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, but this proposition is converted simply so that whatever experience a man enjoys or suffers is attributed to his own *karma* or action. Every individual lives through a succession of lives, and in each new birth his position and his fortunes are determined by his *karma*. This process of *saṁsāra*, or wandering, goes on until through one of the ways by which deliverance is attained the soul is freed from the bonds of *karma* and from the experiences to which it leads; this means from the limitations of finite personal existence. In the Upanishads we have indications of the manner in which *karma* operates. There is the famous passage in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*,

<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā* (Barnett's Trans.), I, 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 35.

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in which the effect of *kārm* in determining the destiny of the soul after death is set forth.

Those whose conduct has been good will quickly attain some good birth, the birth of a Brāhman or a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya. But those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or a Chandāla.<sup>1</sup>

It is a far cry from the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* to present-day Hinduism. The ancient *varṇa* system has ramified into a thousand branches and we have the caste system with which we are familiar. It is a matter of minor importance whether *jāti* is a natural development from *varṇa*, or whether it is something different which has simply been grafted on. The fact remains that the belief persists in our own days that a man's position in the social structure is the outcome of his *karma*. There is among the educated classes a considerable and growing number of unbelievers. There is a growing tendency to mitigate the asperities of caste restrictions, particularly in matters connected with eating and drinking, and with ceremonial purity generally. The prejudice against inter-dining is breaking down, and we have seen in recent years a growing number of inter-caste marriages. But it is doubtful how far the structure as a whole has been affected. I very seriously question the statement which is sometimes made that caste is disappearing in India. In the villages, where the mass of the people live, it is not disappearing. Even there the system has had to adjust itself to a certain extent to the changing conditions of modern life, from the operation of which the Indian villager is no more exempt than the villagers of any other country. But the system itself persists, and it will persist until there is a radical change in the marriage system. A few inter-caste marriages among the more highly educated sections of the community

<sup>1</sup> *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, V, 10, 7.

will not bring about this. It will require a revolution in the thoughts and habits of the people as a whole. The belief in *karma* has a powerful hold on the minds of the ordinary people and on the very considerable number of the orthodox among the educated classes, and in nothing is it manifested more strongly than in the belief that where a man is in society, there he is because of his own act. Not only is his place in society pre-determined, but so also is the *dharma* which belongs to it. In the modern world the individual Hindu exercises a large measure of freedom in the ordering of his life, but there is the whole round of ritual which the faithful Hindu must observe and the whole complex of restrictions by which his life is hedged about.

## (2) THE ĀŚRAMAS

There is another feature of Hindu social life which, from the place which was given to it in the ancient Scriptures, must have been in very common, if not universal, practice, the *āśramas*. For members of the twice-born castes four *āśramas*, or stages were prescribed: (1) the *brahmachāry-āśrama*, or student stage; (2) the *grihasthāśrama*, or householder stage; (3) the *vānaprasthāśrama*, the stage of the forest-dweller or hermit; and (4) the *sannyāsāśrama*, or the stage of the homeless ascetic. The Law Books enter into great detail in prescribing the kind of life that is to be lived at each of these stages. What lies behind the whole conception is the Hindu idea that one does not find his true being in the fulfilment of what we speak of as the duties of his ordinary worldly occupation, even when he sees these duties in the light of a divine purpose. It is necessary, however, to come to some sort of terms with the world.

It became common in quite early times to send a boy belonging to one of the twice-born castes, after investiture

with the sacred thread, to a *guru* or teacher. The practice goes back certainly to the *Vedic* period, and it was well established in the time of the *Upanishads*, for some of the discussions recorded there took place between teacher and pupil. In the house of his *guru* the youth passed through an education and discipline of the most rigorous kind. Elaborate rules were laid down in the Law Books for the conduct of his life in every single part of it—his sleeping and waking, his eating and drinking, his dress, his relations with his fellow-pupils and his relations with his teacher. In his education the study of the *Veda* was fundamental, but at its fullest it included the whole range of human knowledge. In the *Chhândogya Upanishad* a student gives a list of the subjects which he had studied, religious, literary and scientific, ending with “*Sarpa* and *Devajana-Vidyā*”, which is explained as “the science of serpents or poisons, and the sciences of the genii, such as the making of perfumes, dancing, singing, playing, and other fine arts”.<sup>1</sup> But underlying the whole system of education was the conception of truth, in relation to which all other knowledge and all attainments became of secondary or less than secondary importance, truth which, however, in its purity was not to be lightly imparted to anyone—the truth of the Self. It was only rarely and to the most earnest of students that this truth was imparted. As we shall see, there was more than one interpretation of the ultimate meaning of reality; the various schools of philosophy bear witness to this. But undoubtedly from the time of the classical *Upanishads* it was held by the most influential of the thinkers of India that the fundamental truth of the Universe was contained in the saying: *Tat tvam asi*, Thou art That. Even where this truth was not imparted, the whole background and the

<sup>1</sup> *Chhândogya Upanishad*, VII, i, 2.

whole spirit of education is to induce a characteristic attitude to the human world. It had to be done, but man did not find in the world a pathway to reality, but only a trackless waste, which the seeker must abandon if he would find his way to his soul's true good.

The second *āśrama* was that of the *grihastha* or householder. It was the duty of the Hindu when he had completed his studies to enter on this *āśrama*, and this meant to marry and beget children. It is said in the *Brāhmaṇas* that man owes debts, viz., sacrifices to the gods, study of the *Vedas* to the seers, offspring to the Manes, and hospitality to man. The third debt is very important, for to this day it is essential that a man should have a son to perform the ceremonies due to the Manes when he departs, or, if none is born to him, that he should adopt one. Every householder has his multifarious duties, the duties of his station in life, and to these he must attend. I have heard it claimed by Hindu apologists that the duties of ordinary life are given a more significant place in Hinduism than in any other religion, and there is a sense in which this is true. All activities, domestic, social, industrial, and political, have prescriptions laid down for their due and proper performance, and for all there is appropriate religious ceremonial. Further, in many Hindu writings we are told with a considerable amount of detail of the spirit by which the individual should be inspired in the performance of his duties. Finally, for the average individual, the householder stage must have been always, as it continues to be, the last stage. With all that, from early times it was looked upon as a lower stage in man's spiritual progress. The Real, the Eternal, was found not in the temporal, but in flight from it.

I recall being present a good many years ago at a meeting where people belonging to different religions were discussing

the relation of religion to the world. A young Englishman had been speaking of the necessity of applying Christian principles to every department of human activity, including business. He was followed by a Hindu merchant, one of the wealthiest men in India. The merchant began by saying: "The last speaker has spoken from the materialistic point of view. I wish to speak from the spiritual point of view." He went on to say that to his mind religion had nothing to do with business. He himself found in religion a relief from the cares of business, but the two could not be mixed up together.

The typical Hindu teaching is that one should perform the works of one's office "without attachment to the fruit of works". Best of all one should after paying the four debts break the ties by which one is bound to the world, and become a *vānaprastha*, or forest-dweller.

The third and fourth stages have not always been clearly differentiated either in theory or in practice. The Abbé Dubois wrote of the *Vānaprasthas*:

I doubt if there are any of them left in the country watered by the Indus and the Ganges, where this sect of philosophers (sic) certainly flourished at one time in great numbers. The sect has entirely disappeared from the Peninsula of India.<sup>1</sup>

In the Law Books there are two stages in the process of withdrawal from the world, from its temptations and its tasks alike, and the duties which belong to each stage are clearly defined. The *Vānaprastha* is to spend his time in the forest, exposing himself to hardships and austerities, but he is to continue the recitation of the *Veda* and the performance of the five sacrifices. The *Sannyāsi*, on the other hand, breaks all social ties and mortifies all desires.

<sup>1</sup> *Hindu Manners and Customs*, p. 507.

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When by the disengagement of heart] he becomes indifferent to all objects, he can find happiness both in this world and after death.

He who has in this manner gradually given up all attachments and is freed from all pairs [of opposites], reposes in Brahman alone.<sup>1</sup>

### (3) MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

Caste and the *Āśramas* are then the two great distinctive features of Hindu social life. The former persists to this day. The latter also persists, but in a greatly changed form. The ideal which it expresses continues to influence powerfully the minds of great numbers of people. There are still a few schools where the attempt is made to educate young men on the traditional lines, but for the great majority the *brahmachārī* stage is passed by the members of the higher castes in schools and Colleges where the curricula and methods of teaching are largely Western, and where until recently the medium of instruction was universally English. During the long political struggle politics invaded the field of education, and many political leaders encouraged students to rebel against the authority of their teachers when their teachers' judgment did not coincide with their own. Yet the old *guru-śishya* relationship has not completely disappeared, and every teacher who has sought to give his best to his students will admit that along with many disappointments he has experienced much encouragement. He will not fail to have been touched by the spirit of some of his best students, who with touching personal devotion have put themselves under his leadership in their search for truth. We are on the eve of great changes. The process of "vernacularization" has begun, and changes in the spirit and the content of education are inevitable.

The *grihasthāśrama* has in modern times acquired a

<sup>2</sup> *The Laws of Manu* (S.B.E.), VI, 80 f.

significance considerably at its own time, what it possessed in ancient times. The individual is not as a rule slip naturally into a position which was prepared for his reception. In these days there is in many spheres a grim struggle for existence. The student emerges from College too often with little idea of what his life-work is to be. In complete contravention of *brahmachārya* ideals it was common for many of them until recent years to be married and to have on their shoulders the cares of a family in their student days; and though this is now less common it is still by no means uncommon. Whether married or unmarried the young man must as early as possible begin to make his contribution to the maintenance of the joint family. The consequence is that there is severe competition for certain classes of appointments, especially for posts in Government offices, where a man can be sure of his pay and of a pension at the end of his service. The competition is not simply within certain communities, but all communities in recent times have been successful in securing from Government a certain share of these appointments, so that the son of a tailor or even of a sweeper may be found sitting alongside a Brāhman in a Government office. In professions like Law, Medicine and Engineering, one finds likewise all the communities represented. The same is true of many of the new lines of employment which have been opened up with the advance of science and invention—modern transport, the cinema, radio and the like. The great majority of young men continue to follow the family occupation, but, as I have indicated, far-reaching and significant changes are taking place. As a rule also they continue to live on in the joint family, even if their work may lead them to the formation of associations different from those of the other members of the family. But here too a change is taking place. There is



firstly the fact that if of their profession they may have to take them so far from home. Also there are nowadays in the country many couples who find the restraints of the family home irksome, and who accordingly break away and set up homes of their own.

In modern India it is much less common than it was for old people deliberately to adopt the manner of life prescribed for the other two *āśramas*. One does occasionally, but only rarely, hear that some well-known man has withdrawn from the world and become an ascetic. But the ideal has not by any means been lost, and one finds it being cherished by many people who have no intention of making a complete breach with society and withdrawing to the forest. The faithful Hindu of the present day is more likely to remain in his home, but to withdraw himself from mundane concerns and to devote much of his time to religious meditation, seeking thus to fulfil in the spirit, if not in the letter, the intention of the ancient seers and law-givers.

#### (4) THE ŚŪDRAS AND UNTOUCHABLES

The picture which I have been trying to give of the Hindu social order has been over-simplified. What I have done so far has been to give an outline, and a very bare one, of the organization of the life of what, for want of a better word, we must speak of as the "Caste Hindus". (*"Suvarṇa Hindus"* was Mahatma Gandhi's term.) Further, the three "twice-born" *varṇas* have been put in the centre of the picture, and the others, who form the mass of the population, have hardly come into the picture at all. I must now try to correct this. We have seen that the *Śūdras* form the fourth division in the Hindu community, that they are excluded from the study of the *Veda* and from the privileges which go along with this, and that their business is to serve meekly

the other three castes. There are different servilities under which the Śūdra traditionally lives and is varied, but all of them are related to the recognition that he is a slave. Here, for example, is a passage from *Manu*:

A Śūdra, whether bought or unbought, he (the Brāhman) may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the Self-existent to be the slave of a Brāhman.

A Śūdra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?<sup>1</sup>

It may be said that all this is ancient history, and that the relationships of the different communities to each other have in modern times been fundamentally changed. The Śūdra is no more a slave; in the eyes of the law he and the Brāhman are equal, with the same protection in the enjoyment of their rights and subject to the same penalties for their misdeeds. There is nothing to prevent them, if they have the means and the ability, from undertaking higher studies. But they still are the victims of the spirit of social exclusiveness. The individual's social position is hereditarily determined.

The position of the Śūdras is, however, a matter of secondary importance when compared with that of those who fall outside the four *varnas*; the Untouchables, as we have been accustomed to call them. There are at the present time in India some fifty or sixty million persons belonging to communities which fall under this description. It has been common for Europeans to speak of them as Pariahs, so applying to them a name by which one untouchable community, by no means the lowest, in South India, is known. But there are many communities of them, each with its own hereditary occupation, and with its own customs, governing behaviour both within the community and in relation to members of other communities. They are all alike

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws of Manu* (S.B.E.), X, 413, 414.

in this: that they have not by any means been counted as Hindus at all, excluded from the privileges to which the Hindu is entitled. They are condemned to the performance of the most menial tasks; they were segregated outside the village walls, they were subject to a great variety of social and economic disabilities, including, for example, the right to use public wells; and their touch brings defilement to the caste Hindu.

The old theory, which is by no means dead, was that the Outcaste's position was the fruit of his own deeds. I have quoted above the passage in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*, where it is said that "those whose conduct is evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or a Chandāla (an Outcaste)". This may not be accepted literally by the average modern educated Hindu, but the explicit acceptance of a belief is one thing, and its sub-conscious operation in men's minds is another. Modern Hinduism has become ashamed of untouchability, and drastic legislation providing for its removal has been passed by the new Government of India. This is the fruit of the work of a succession of social reformers.

Within a few weeks of my first arrival in India I was present at a crowded meeting of Bombay students held in our own College Hall under the chairmanship of the great Mr. G. K. Gokhale. The subject of discussion was the Depressed Classes, and I shall never forget the enthusiasm which moved the whole gathering for the removal of what was admitted to be a grievous blot on the social life of India. I was profoundly moved myself, and I left the meeting feeling that I had arrived in India at one of the great turning-points in her history. But nothing practical followed.

During the years that have intervened there has been a growing sense that untouchability is a grave social evil.

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Mr. Gandhi made the untouchables the object of his special cares, and he provided them with education, the *Harijans*, or sons of Hari (one of the Hindu deities). He never sought to cover over in any way the injustice under which they suffer, nor did he ever cease to condemn them. His position was that of a Hindu who felt the shame of the wrong that his co-religionists had inflicted on those whom they should have treated as their brothers. His sense of humiliation was deepened by the fact that large numbers had found in Christianity that social deliverance which Hinduism denied them. He was convinced that this ought not to be.

For the so-called Caste Hindus to serve the *Harijans* in a constructive manner is to get off their backs, to go down on their knees to them, to treat *Harijan* children as their own and *Harijan* men and women as blood brothers and sisters.<sup>1</sup>

In one of his articles he quoted with approval passages from a speech by the Diwan of Mysore in which plans are set forth for helping the Depressed Classes and in which there is the following statement of aim:

The aim should be to "Hinduize" them more and more, for they belong to the Hindu community, and to offer them every facility to remain within the fold. They will be a mighty accession to the strength of our body politic.<sup>2</sup>

This is all extremely interesting to the student of Hinduism, involving as it does recognition of the fact that the miseries in which the Depressed Classes are involved are the consequences not of their own sin, but of the sin of their more highly favoured brethren. It is difficult to reconcile this with the doctrine of *karma* as it has commonly been understood in Hinduism. To this day it is common for Hindus to attribute all ill or good fortune (and particularly the social environment into which they have been born) to

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Missions*, Gandhi, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79 f.

their doings in form of this belief is abandoned, then one of the main pillars, not only of the doctrine and practice of untouchability, but of caste itself has gone, and even of the broader conception of *varna*. I may quote Mr. Gandhi again, for he was more truly representative of Hindu thought than any other contemporary person. He said a few years ago in conversation with an American visitor:

Hinduism does not believe in caste. I would obliterate it at once. But I believe in *varnadharma* which is the law of life. I believe that some people are born to teach and some to defend and some to engage in trade and agriculture and some to do manual labour, so much so that these occupations become hereditary. The law of *varna* is nothing but the law of the conservation of energy. Why should my son not be a scavenger if I am one?<sup>1</sup>

He thus seems to base *varnadharma* not on a metaphysical but on a biological principle, the validity of which is very doubtful. It is assumed that specialized capacity is hereditarily transmitted. This is an assumption which is capable of being tested scientifically but which does not need to wait for detailed scientific examination, for the ordinary intelligent observer can make his contribution to the discussion. He will question whether the hereditary differentiation of the population in India has furnished the most satisfactory means for the selection of the persons best fitted for the performance of certain functions in society. Even if it did, there is the further question whether this hereditary differentiation can be maintained without involving social discrimination of an objectionable kind. I have again and again heard caste Hindus say that their only reason for refusing to touch a sweeper was that because of the nature of his work he was unclean. If this be so, then by tying a man to his hereditary occupation you fasten also upon him the

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Missions*, p. 175.

social consequences of membership in the community to which he belongs. In one of his conversations with Dr. John R. Mott, Mr. Gandhi said :

Untouchability is a hideous untruth. My motive in launching the untouchability campaign is clear. What I am aiming at is not every Hindu touching an "untouchable", but every touchable Hindu driving untouchability from his heart, going through a complete change of heart. Inter-dining or intermarrying is not the point. I may not dine with you, but I ought not to harbour the feeling that if I dined with you I should be polluted. If I was a woman to be married, I should not say "I cannot marry a man because he is an untouchable".<sup>1</sup>

So far as I know the minds of the untouchables, the change which they desire to see in the caste Hindus is a change of heart that will issue in action. If a man takes the line that there are social groups with no member of which he will have free social intercourse he must have a reason for this. The allegation that they follow a dirty occupation will not be a satisfactory reason, unless it can be further shown that their personal habits are dirty. But even if this were proved, the case would only have been strengthened against the hereditary fixing of the individual in his place in society. Mr. Gandhi set a high personal example in his treatment of members of the Depressed Classes, and there can be no doubt of his sincerity when he insisted on the dignity of all human vocations. But, while he held that sweeping is irrevocably the vocation of the sweeper, he did not succeed in persuading the average Hindu that this vocation was such as to warrant him who followed it in claiming equality of treatment with people in most other walks of life.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

## (5) "MY STATION AND ITS DUTIES"

Bradley's chapter on "My Station and its Duties" in *Ethical Studies* has made a great impression on the minds of many Hindu philosophical thinkers. It has been held that there is a close affinity between Bradley's position and the Hindu position as set forth, for example, in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. There is the same insistence that the individual realizes himself in the performance of the duties of his station. In regard to this, two things may be said. Firstly, there is a profound difference between the kind of realization which the Hindu finds in the performance of these duties and that which Bradley contemplated. According to Bradley, the individual realizes himself in the performance of his duties in society because he is a part of a social organism. Quoting with approval Goethe's saying: "Be a whole or join a whole", he adds: "You can not be a whole, unless you join a whole." He goes on to say that "when that whole is truly infinite, and when your personal will is wholly made one with it, then you also have reached the extreme of homogeneity and specification in one, and have attained a perfect self-realization."<sup>1</sup> In Hinduism, certainly in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we do not find the Hegelian idea that the social self is a larger and richer self. The emphasis is not on the enrichment of personality in the performance of one's duties to society, but on the performance of the works of one's office without regard to the fruit of works, an individualistic ideal; it is on detachment from one's environment, including the social environment, rather than on fuller identification. Secondly, there is the question how one's station is determined or discovered. Bradley fails to answer this question. He tells us that the individual "is one of a people, he was born in a

<sup>1</sup> *Ethical Studies*, pp. 79 f.

family, he lives in a certain society; in a certain state. What he has to do depends on what his place is, what his function is, and that all comes from his station in the organism". So birth has something to do with it. No man need set out to be a perfect man without trying to be a perfect member of his country and all his smaller communities, and he speaks disdainfully of "star-gazing virgins with souls above their spheres". But how precisely one is to discover this sphere is left undetermined. In orthodox Hinduism, on the other hand, it is determined. It is true that, in our days, freedom has come to be allowed to the individual in the choice of a profession which in ancient times would have been unthinkable. But this freedom has a strictly limited range. It means that the professions and the "white collar jobs" are no longer the inalienable preserves of the "twice-born". But for the great majority of Hindus their place in society is the same as that which was occupied by their forefathers.

#### (6) THE MERITS OF THE HINDU SOCIAL SYSTEM

We shall do a grave injustice to the Hindu social order if we fail to recognize in it a great and an honest effort to provide a scheme whereby men may live together. I have condemned the principle in accordance with which the place of the individual in society is determined, but, in any attempt at an evaluation of the caste system, due credit must be given to its positive merits.

There is general agreement in these days that it is wrong that the individual's station and duties should be determined simply by heredity. But, on the other hand, I have heard Hindus maintain that this method of selection is preferable to that which has been followed in some Western countries where there has been a general scramble for place and position, political, economic and social. They have held



that an aristocracy of birth is in no more need of defence than an aristocracy of wealth or brute strength, or even of cleverness. There is enough truth in their contention to cause us to reflect. The Western world has not yet discovered a method of testing merit which is above criticism. The Hindu points proudly to the fact that his system has enabled India to survive all the shocks that have come to it through many centuries from foreign invasion and from the impact of outside influences. "Survival value" is not the highest kind of value, but it does say something for the Hindu social system that it has proved itself capable of persisting for so long under conditions so adverse.

Further, it has its value from the point of view of the individual. In the modern Western world we have become familiar with the strange and disconcerting phenomenon of individuals who have cut themselves loose from almost all social ties. In all our great cities there are persons who are so uprooted. They belong to no social group—they have no family ties, and they belong to no Church and to no association that exists for any other than the most trivial of purposes. In return for money payments they can have their needs and their desires supplied. They may make some casual friends, but they "belong" nowhere. They often resent the suggestion that society or any social group has any claims on them. They think that so long as they pay their debts and otherwise live within the law they do all that the community can properly require of them.

In Hinduism, this uprooted type of individual is almost unknown. Wherever the Hindu goes he is known as a member of a particular community. The eyes of his caste-fellows are upon him, and his conduct is to them a matter of interest and critical discussion. He is never exempt from the influence of some kind of public opinion. Even in a city he is under the

eye of a section of the community in a way in which only the dweller in a village or a country town, or the person who has voluntarily associated himself with some group in a city, can be in this country. This public opinion may operate largely negatively and repressively; it is not likely to stimulate men to the pursuit of the highest ethical ideals, or to encourage them to the living of a life of adventurous service. But even so it has its value.

I quote two personal experiences to illustrate this. Firstly, a young educated Christian, a convert from one of the higher castes of Hinduism, had given way to drink. I believe his loss of self-control was related to a loss of hold on essential Christian things and of a vital connection with the Church. An Indian Christian minister told me that he had been talking with the young man's Hindu brother, who assured him that if he would return to them they would put him on the straight path. "And", the minister added, "the disconcerting thing is that what the brother said is probably true."

Secondly, shortly before I left India I had a conversation with a leading Hindu public man who was interested in the care of destitute children. He was discussing some of their problems, and he mentioned, as one of the most difficult, that of the child without caste affiliation. He said they had found that, whatever training such a child received, when he went out into the world almost inevitably disaster overtook him. He had no place in society, and, lacking this support, he would go down and find bottom among the lowest dregs of the population.

Facts such as these should have their lessons for Christian people. In the social applications of religion two things are important: (1) conventions, with the institutions in which these are embodied; and (2) the principles by which these are supported and by reference to which they may be

adjusted to changing conditions. Christianity places the emphasis on the second of these. It stands in contrast to Hinduism and indeed, I think, to all the other religions of the world, in that it provides for its adherents no unalterable set of rules by which they are to live. Our Lord supplanted the Jewish Law not by a new legalism, but by a new Spirit. It has been necessary for our Christian prophets continually to emphasize this anew, for, not merely in one section of the Church but in every section, there has appeared the insidious tendency to think of our Lord's will as expressed in a programme for action, to be put into practice without variation in all the varied circumstances of life: to substitute the letter for the spirit. Actually the Christian life has been lived under the most diverse conditions, economic, social and political. Its "pattern" has always to some degree had to be adapted to circumstances, but never its spirit. For its spirit is that of Jesus Christ Himself, who in the most definite possible ways enunciated the principle of Christian conduct. It is set forth in the Golden Rule, and in the still more unmistakable principle: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." All conventions and institutions must be tried and, if necessary, revised by reference to this standard. Hinduism, on the other hand, has a great complex of conventions and institutions, the principles underlying many of which are not easy to discover. The consequence is that it is impossible to adjust them to changing conditions. The Hindu has no maxim comparable to the Christian *Dilige et fac quod vis*.

But if the Christian regards the detailed rules that govern the life of the believer as of secondary importance, this does not mean that they are of little or no importance. Some years ago I was told of a missionary who interpreted our

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Lord's supersession of the Law by the Gospel to simple village Christians as meaning for them not merely release from the obligation to observe the prescriptions of the *dharma* of their old Hindu community, but release from any kind of fixed observances whatsoever. Nothing could be more mistaken. Indeed, I venture to think that one of the great needs of the Church in India --and not in India only--- is for a system of Christian *dharma*. By this I mean a system of conventions which shall form the normal and natural channels in which Christian love shall flow. If it is understood as such, and not as a set of unchangeable divine ordinances, obedience to it may be not a burden but a release from bondage, a service in which men may find freedom. In this connection, it is a matter of interest that at the last Lambeth Conference the Anglican Bishops considered the question of drawing up a rule of life. Such a rule might have very great value if adopted and put into practice. But what is above all important is that any Christian rule of life should have a content that is in every detail Christian.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ETHICAL PROBLEM

I DO not intend in this chapter to undertake a comprehensive study of the Hindu ethical problem. I attempted this in an earlier work on *Hindu Ethics*, and I shall not repeat any large part of what was there said. What I propose to do is to give some general characterization of the Hindu ethical position over against the Christian, and to pass on to a brief study of *ahimsā*, which some in these days have come to regard as the most distinctive feature of Hindu morality.

#### (1) HINDU AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

One hears it continually said in India that the moral teachings of all religions are the same. Is this true? In particular, is it true that the moral teaching of Hinduism is the same as that of Christianity? Is there at the heart of these two religions an identity of understanding of the relation of the individual to his fellow-men and to the Universe sufficient to support common ethical ideals and standards? The question is not whether one is higher and the other lower, but whether they are the same. It is quite obvious that wherever men live together in society there must be a considerable area of conduct in which all are agreed as to what is right and wrong. I am convinced, however, that there is a considerable area in which Christianity and Hinduism differ.

The ethical problem is inseparable from the more general problem of the nature of reality and of the relation of the individual to what is ultimate in the Universe. I began the last chapter by saying that Hinduism is essentially a

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social system. Paradoxically, in the most characteristic expressions of Hinduism, both in thought and in practice, society occupies a place of secondary, or less than secondary, importance. Newman in his *Apologia* mentions an early stage in his religious development characterized by "mis-trust of the reality of material phenomena, and making me rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and self-evident beings, myself and my Creator".<sup>1</sup> A thought not unlike this has occupied the Hindu mind not as a mood or as a stage in its development but as the settled conviction of the most influential school of Hindu thought down through the centuries. Only the two realities have been not the self and its Creator, but the self (or *atman*) and Brahman; and these two have been conceived not as two but as one. It is in the realization of this unity that man finds the true end of his being, deliverance, *moksha*, or whatever other name may be used to designate it. If we think of virtue in relation to this end, then it is obvious that the term will apply to those qualities which contribute to its realization in the individual; that is to say, to the qualities connected with the loosening of the attachment of the individual to the illusory world of experience and with progress towards the knowledge of the self as one with Brahman. This spirit pervades Hinduism even where the *Vedānta* metaphysic is not accepted. Here, for example, is the teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

The Man of the Rule shall ever hold himself under the Rule, abiding alone in a secret place, utterly subdued in mind, without craving and without possessions.

On a pure spot he shall set for himself a firm seat, neither over-high nor over-low, and having over it a cloth, a deer's skin and *kuśa* grass.

On this couch he shall seat himself with thought intent, and

<sup>1</sup> *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, p. 4.

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the workings of mind and sense-instruments restrained, and shall for purification of spirit labour on the Rule.

Firm, holding body, head and neck in unmoving equipoise, gazing on the end of his nose, and looking not round about him.

Calm of spirit, void of fear, abiding under the vow of chastity, with mind restrained and thought set on Me, so shall he sit that is under the Rule, given over to Me.

In this wise holding himself ever under the Rule, the strict-minded Man of the Rule comes to the peace that ends in extinction and that abides with Me.<sup>1</sup>

If these directions were to be universally followed it would mean the end of society and of human life itself. This may be conceived to be in itself desirable, but it does not preclude the prescription of ways of life for those who have not yet reached the stage of attaining final deliverance. The *Bhagavad-gītā* gives the following as one of the lists of qualities which should characterize the life of the earnest seeker:

Fearlessness, purity of the Goodness Mood, abiding in knowledge and the Rule, almsgiving, restraint of sense, sacrifice, scripture-reading, mortification, uprightness.

Harmlessness, truth, wrathlessness, renunciation, restraint of spirit, lack of malice, pity towards born beings, unwantoning sense, tenderness, modesty, steadfastness.

Heroic temper, patience, constancy, purity, innocence, and lack of overweening spirit are in him that is born to God's estate, O thou of Bharata's race.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. L. D. Barnett says of this passage that "the moral qualities are described which appear in men qualified to rise higher in the cycle of birth and finally win redemption".<sup>3</sup> It may be instructive to compare both the passages which I have quoted with any New Testament account of the qualities which should mark the life of the Christian. As characteristic a passage as any is to be found in Romans 12, where, following an injunction regarding the exercise of the various

<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI, 10 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI, 1 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

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gifts which God has distributed among His servants in the Church, St. Paul proceeds:

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; contributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

The contrast between the pictures of life given in the Christian passage and that given in the Hindu passages is very striking. We must not, however, overstrain the contrast, certainly not to the extent of ignoring the positive activities which the *Bhagavad-gītā* enjoins. These are full of interest. They are not all means which contribute directly to the loosening of the bonds of *karma*, but they help the soul in its upward progress. We have here evidence of that dualism which characterizes Hindu ethics at every point, the dualism of relative and absolute values. Reality is found in a condition in which everything empirical is negated, in which *karma* ceases to have any meaning, in which there is no longer a self that is subject to *karma*. For this reason the virtues which are held in highest regard are predominantly passive and ascetic, virtues which lead a man not to society but away from it. The distinctive Christian virtues, on the other hand, are predominantly active, and they lead a man to society.

It has been held that Christianity, no less than Hinduism, has a place for passive, ascetic and world-negating virtues. This is true, but with a difference. A point which is relevant to this was put by the late Professor Bowman, shortly before his death, in conversation with Canon Raven. He



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said: "So long as nearly half mankind thinks that life is a thing to be escaped from, and nearly the other half thinks it a thing to be enjoyed and exploited, and a minority of us Christians think it a thing to be redeemed, there can be no real or lasting peace."<sup>1</sup> This profound remark was made as an *obiter dictum*, and it was uttered with reference to a particular ethical problem, that of peace; but it puts very clearly and concisely the three most familiar alternative points of view regarding man's relationship to life—to the world and to society. The first is the orthodox Hindu point of view; it is also the point of view of some Christians, but it is emphatically not a Christian point of view. The second is the point of view of "the world", though in these days even "the world" has been coming to realize some of the difficulties connected with the attempt to enjoy and exploit life. The third is the Christian point of view, though many who are called Christians have not realized it.

For the Christian, life cannot be a thing to be escaped from. The whole of the New Testament testifies to the fact that the gift of God is life. The earthly life of the individual is brief, and the whole world-order in which it has its setting is transitory; but that does not mean that either life or the world is to be treated as of no account, to be negated, to be fled from. It was to redeem the world that our Lord came. He came to redeem human life, so that the brief, frail and apparently insignificant lives of sinful men and women might be delivered from sin and from futility and might be so transformed as to become the vehicles of God's eternal purposes and to share in His eternity. He came to redeem society, establishing in the world a community of His followers, who should be bound to Himself and to one another by the bonds of a love such as the world had not

<sup>1</sup> *The Student Movement*, October, 1945.

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known before, and who should be under an inner compulsion in word and in action to make the love of God, to which their love was the response, known to all men. This meant, for the followers of Christ, living in the world but being not of it; a distinction which, to some, has seemed to be exceedingly subtle, but which to the faithful Christian has no subtlety in it at all. We live in God's world, and He has provided for the use of man many good things. They are to be used, not abused. There may come times or there may be circumstances in which in the interests of the higher good of the Kingdom of God it may be the duty of the Christian to renounce them all. We must at all times and in all circumstances hold lightly to them. The transitory may, and ought to be, the instrument of the Eternal, but must never usurp the place of the Eternal; and this is true of the things that serve our social well-being as well as those that serve our physical well-being.

For the Hindu, the *summum bonum* is not life, at any rate in the sense in which we understand the word. In what is almost universally claimed as its highest and most typical formulation it is the knowledge of the identity of the Self and Brahman. This is achieved not in society, not even in a redeemed society, but as the outcome of a solitary quest. All social organization and all social rules and injunctions, all, in short, that is meant by *dharma*, belong to a level of existence which ceases to have any meaning or reality when the higher level is reached. Some of our Hindu philosophers have claimed that, in the *Vedānta*, self-realization is the end; but they have had at the same time to admit that the term means something very different to them from what it means to the Western Idealist. It has been common for Hindu writers to claim that the *Vedānta* goes beyond Christianity in its teaching regarding the supreme moral duty of loving

one's neighbour as one's self. I think Deussen was the first to enunciate this idea. It appears both in his *Philosophy of the Upanishads* and in his *System of the Vedānta*. Here is one of the important passages:

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself is the requirement of the Bible. But on what grounds is this demand to be based, since feeling is in myself alone and not in another? "Because", the Veda here adds in explanation, "thy neighbour is in truth thy very self, and what separates you from him is mere illusion." As in this case, so at every point of the system. The New Testament and the *Upanishads*, these two noblest products of the religious consciousness of mankind, are found when we sound their deeper meaning to be nowhere in irreconcilable contradiction, but in a manner the most attractive serve to elucidate and complete one another.<sup>1</sup>

Many modern writers and speakers have followed Deussen in this. I am convinced that they are under a complete misapprehension. The Christian love of one's neighbour does not mean the blurring or denial of all distinctions between them. In the words of Hartmann, loving one's neighbour as one's self means "the transference of interest from the I to the Thou".<sup>2</sup> This transference of interest is fundamental to Christian morality. If self and neighbour were identical, then the proposition "Thy neighbour is thyself" would be convertible simply into "Thyself art thy neighbour", and the man who gave himself to the pursuit of his own interests could justly claim that by so doing he was serving the interests of his neighbour. This is a complete confounding of the moral issue. If society consists of a congeries of individuals who are essentially identical, and whose apparent distinction from each other is really illusory, then love for one's neighbour and the service of one's neighbour cannot mean what they are commonly understood to mean. There are kindly impulses in the human heart which no theory is

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethics* (E.T.), Vol. II, p. 268.

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capable of completely stifling. They have never been stifled in India, but the tendency has been to depreciate individuality, and, by implication, the spirit of service which is the outcome of "the transference of interest from the I to the Thou".

There is a fundamental paradox in the attitude of the Hindu mind to the individual and to society. It remains true, as I have said, that Hinduism is essentially a social system, and that the interests of the individual are subordinated to it. From this point of view *dharma* is all in all. It is also true that society and *dharma* are, according to the highest Hindu teaching, ultimately unreal, and that the individual finds his true being in flight from them and from individuality itself. The apparent paradox is bound up with the dualism in which man is involved. He belongs to two worlds, which have nothing in common with each other. On the one hand, he is a self, eternal, unqualified, identical with Brahman, the ineffable. As such he has no concern with anything temporal. On the other hand, he is a self in *samsāra*, subject to *karma*. If the world order and the social order in which he lives are ultimately illusory, indeed more truly non-existent, nevertheless somehow or other the self in *samsāra* has to adjust himself to them. So it comes about that we have elaborate regulations for human conduct in every conceivable variety of circumstance. So it comes about also that we have a Hindu culture, rich in literature, art and music, though not interested in history, and with an art that is largely symbolic. This fact has led Pandit Nehru to write:

I should have thought that India's culture, taken as a whole, never emphasized the negation of life, though some of its philosophies did so; it seems to have done so much less than Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Discovery of India*, p. 58.

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Actually, as we shall see, almost all the Indian philosophies have as their goal the deliverance of man from the limitations of finite personality.

The contemplation of the real provides no direct guidance as to the form which man's adjustment to the things of sense and time should take, for the temporal is not integrated with the eternal. It has therefore meant much for India that there should have come down from ancient times, with authority believed to be divine, teaching regarding the whole duty of man. This has proved at the same time convenient and embarrassing. It has been convenient, because the unquestioning acceptance of traditional forms of behaviour has meant much in India, as in other lands, for the stability of society. It has been embarrassing, for forms of behaviour which rest upon the authority of ancient tradition are not easily adjusted to changing conditions. Neither the *Vedānta* nor any of the other Hindu philosophical systems furnishes any principle which will serve as a guide to this adjustment.

### (a) *In Hinduism* (2) AHIMŚĀ

In recent times the doctrine of *ahimsā* has been so often declared to be the special feature of Hindu ethics, that it seems to merit a little detailed consideration. The word means "non-injury", in the sense of refraining from the destruction of living creatures. The doctrine has a long history. Its origins are obscure, but its psychological roots are probably to be found in the awe and wonder with which men at an early stage in their development tend to regard life in all its forms. From early times the rule of *ahimsā* was imposed on hermits and monks. The prohibition of injury related not only to animal life, but also to vegetable life; so that the breaking off of a twig from a bush, or the crush-

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ing of a seed, was an offence of the same kind as the killing of an animal. If this had been followed to its logical conclusion, and monks had refrained from sustaining their own lives at the expense of the lives of vegetables or animals, their destiny would have been death from starvation. They did not take this extreme line. Instead, they went round with their begging-bowls, and got their food ready prepared from householders, who were not under the same obligation to observe *ahimsā*. The duty of observing it has never been universally accepted by Hindus, but the idea has had a widespread and profound influence among householders of many communities. It explains the value which came to be attached to the practice of vegetarianism. The idea has persisted in many quarters that all life is sacred, and I have myself known of householders who refused to eat green vegetables, because this was supposed to involve the destruction of life, as the eating of "dead" food, such as dried lentils and grains, did not. But a special sanctity has been supposed to attach to animal life, and in many Hindu communities the idea of eating flesh is abhorrent.

There has grown up in recent times, chiefly under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, a tendency to believe that *ahimsā* occupies an essential place, indeed the central place, in Hindu morality. A moment's reflection will convince one that it does not have this place. One needs only to recall the fact that one of the four divisions of Hindu society consists of the *Kshatriyas*, or warriors. Pandit Nehru in his *Discovery of India* has made this clear. He draws attention to the fact that Mahatma Gandhi was a member of a peaceful trading community which was much influenced by the Jain doctrine of non-violence, but there were parts of India to which this doctrine did not extend.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Discovery of India*, p. 387.

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In modern times the idea of *ahimsā* has undergone considerable elaboration, and there is a certain amount of confusion in the interpretations which some of its exponents are giving to it. I seem to be able to trace three strands in present-day thought on the subject.

Firstly, the original idea still persists of the essential sanctity of all life as such. It has been left to the Jains, whom the orthodox Hindus regard as heretics, to give to the world the most extreme manifestation in practice of this idea. Jain monks take the most elaborate precautions to avoid the destruction of life in any form, sweeping the ground before them as they walk, using a cloth to strain the water which they drink, and covering nose and mouth with a cloth to strain the air which they breathe. The Jains have often gone to fantastic lengths in the things which they have done to prevent the destruction of life, but they have not always given the same thought to the well-being of the creatures whose lives they have preserved. Among certain classes of Hindus there still persist practices which are the expression of the belief that the preservation of life is good, irrespective of the quality of the life which is preserved; for example, in refraining from the destruction of vermin and snakes and other noxious creatures, or in objecting to the painless destruction of animals suffering great pain and hopelessly diseased. When, some years ago, Mr. Gandhi gave his sanction to euthanasia for a calf which was in the throes of a painful and incurable disease, he brought on himself a storm of detraction. It was an act of great courage, which did credit both to his heart and to his intelligence, but I think his detractors were more faithful interpreters of the traditional doctrine of *ahimsā* than he was. In the name of "the unity of all life", there is still a fairly widespread failure to discriminate between the relative value of life on its different

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levels. A leading British official, a friend of my own, once admitted to me that his attitude to Hindu ways of life had been permanently biased by an experience which he had the day after his first landing in India. He went out for a morning walk, and he saw men putting out food by the wayside for monkeys, and driving off with sticks poor people who were trying to rescue a handful of it for themselves. In more recent times, during the war, when there was great scarcity of food in Bombay, I used to see day by day sacks of grain being spread on the sea beach to feed pigeons.

Secondly, in modern times there has been a strong tendency to link up *ahimsā* with what we now speak of as humanitarianism. The old sentiment remains, and it is likely to remain, but not as an indiscriminating reverence for life in all the profusion of its forms, from the highest to the lowest. The number of those who would give their protection to the carriers of deadly diseases or to beasts of prey is steadily diminishing. Not only so, but a consideration has been brought forward in defence of *ahimsā* which I think had relatively little place in the original idea. It finds expression in the writings of Mr. Gandhi, for example. In his South African days he paid a visit to India, and in the course of it visited the temple of Kālī in Calcutta, and was horrified by the bloody sacrifices there offered. He tells how a Bengali friend defended the sacrificial practices, assuring him that the victims did not feel anything, because the noise and the drum-beating deadened all sensation of pain. "I could not swallow this", said Mr. Gandhi: "I told him that if the sheep had speech they would tell a different tale."<sup>1</sup> A good many years later Mr. Gandhi, in conversation with myself, spoke of the hardships and injustices to which the Untouchables were subjected. Suddenly he passed from

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Missions*, p. 188.



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them to the animals offered in sacrifice to Kāli, and he said with great feeling: "Their case is worse than that of the Untouchables, for the Untouchables can speak for themselves but these poor dumb animals cannot." The principle on which he stood was perfectly plain. It was that one sins in causing needless pain of body or mind to any sentient creature.

Thirdly, the principle of *ahimsā* has by some been so extended as to equate it with universal love. Professor Radhakrishnan speaks of those rare and precious souls, who, being filled with the spirit of the whole, may be said to be world-conscious. "They are filled with love and friendliness to all humanity. *Ahimsā* or love becomes the central virtue."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gandhi frequently expressed himself in similar terms. *Ahimsā*, as he interpreted and practised it, was not simply the spirit of love which should characterize all our relations with our fellow men and with the lower creation. It was this, but it was also a method or programme of action. He used the term "non-violence" as equivalent to both *ahimsā* and love, and from the idea he derived a whole system of duties. Much of what he had to say is suggestive of that part of the teaching of our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, where He enjoins His disciples not to resist the evil one, but to seek to win by active goodwill him who wrongs them. There are points of resemblance, but they are not so numerous or so close as some superficial students have imagined. Mr. Gandhi's teaching has its negative and its positive side. Negatively it excludes the destruction of life, though with qualifications such as have been hinted at above. It excludes all participation in warfare in any cause whatsoever. It also excludes all attempts to coerce others by any kind of physical impact directed against their bodies.

<sup>1</sup> *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 116.

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(This is one of the most difficult parts of his teaching, for it does not exclude the use of other means to bend the wills of others, even where these means may cause much discomfort or loss to those against whom they are directed, or may even in extreme instances lead to death. Sin attaches in a special way to the physical impact. Dr. Schweitzer has offered the criticism that the concealed application of force may cause more bitterness than an open use of violence.) Positively, his teaching requires the use of "non-violent" means for the attainment of men's ends in all departments of their activity. These include the voluntary taking upon oneself of suffering when this may serve to make the wrongdoer ashamed of his misdeeds whether in the moral and social sphere or in the sphere of politics. It was for this end that he undertook most of his fasts. They include also devices such as non-cooperation and civil disobedience, designed to paralyse a Government which is charged with not being responsive to the national will.

We seem here to have travelled a considerable way from the original idea of *ahimsā*, but Mr. Gandhi was convinced that his interpretation of the doctrine was sound. Out of it he constructed a whole philosophy of life. In the closing chapter of his Autobiography he writes:

My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth. And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realization of truth is *ahimsā*, I shall deem all my labour in writing these chapters to have been in vain.

He adds:

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, p. 404.

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There are features of the *ahimsā* doctrine as interpreted by modern exponents which many Christians have found attractive. The Christian Church inherited from the Jews traditions in the matter of the treatment of animals that were on the whole good. Our Lord's recorded words on the subject, few though they be, reveal the place which the lower creation had in His thoughts. The Church has been led by Him to find the pattern of its conduct in God Himself, in whose providence the birds of the air have a place, and by whom they are fed. Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without Him. In the lives of professing Christians there has often been a large gap between profession and practice in the matter of many of the virtues. Here is one department of human conduct in which the gap is less apparent. Christian sentiment has shown itself increasingly averse to cruelty to animals and increasingly solicitous for their care. There have of late been many evidences of this. At the time of writing<sup>1</sup> much interest has been aroused by the fact that no less than seven Private Members' Bills in the House of Commons have been designed to protect animals from death or needless pain. In so far as *ahimsā* is interpreted, whether rightly or wrongly, as meaning this, Christian people will appreciate the practical outcome of it.

### (b) *In Modern Western Thought*

Apart from this, in modern times the principle of the sacredness of life has commended itself in different forms to people of a variety of types in the West. This has often, though not always, been an outcome of Indian influence. A great deal that has been written and spoken on the subject has been very shallow, but one of the greatest of present-day religious thinkers and men of action, Dr. Albert Schweitzer,

<sup>1</sup> February, 1949.

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has made reverence for life "the root idea of his theory of the universe".<sup>1</sup> It is no part of my present plan to make a detailed study of his thought; but he is one of the world's greatest Christian servants and one of her greatest thinkers, and he has at the same time acknowledged his indebtedness to Hindu influences. So it is impossible to escape the obligation of considering, though it must be cursorily, whether he has not found something which may prove to be a bridge of connection between Christian and Hindu thought.

I am inclined to think that though he explicitly puts reverence for life at the centre of his thinking, he is influenced more than he realizes by something more fundamental, reverence for Jesus Christ. In a way he admits this, but he explains that it is not the historical Jesus, but that it is "the Spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, which overcomes the world".<sup>2</sup> Actually I believe that the Spirit which has inspired him is the same Spirit which inspired the early disciples and which has inspired the saints of all times. The intuitions of the Spirit were, for him, mediated partly through the records of Scripture, partly through the study of the history of religion, and not least through the life of a Christian home and of a congregation of the Christian Church. It seems clear that the most determinative influence in his life and thought has been a deep personal devotion to Jesus Christ. Out of this has grown the "reverence for life", which he would place at the centre.

He himself claims to derive this reverence for life from the "will to live". In a letter to Dr. O. Kraus he wrote:

I never speak in philosophy of "God", but only of "the universal will to live", which I realize in my consciousness in a two-fold

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<sup>1</sup> *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, Vol. I, p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Seaver, *Albert Schweitzer, Christian Revolutionary*, pp. 14 f.

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way: firstly as a creative will outside myself, and secondly as an ethical will within me.

He seems to have had moments of uneasiness in the contemplation of the fact that in deifying the will to live he had found strange companions in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

In Schopenhauer the will-to-live tries to become ethical by turning to world- and life-denial; in Nietzsche, by devoting itself to a deepened world- and life-affirmation.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible to make out a case for either Schopenhauer's or Nietzsche's conclusion. It seems much more difficult to derive from the principle of the universal will to live the duty of compassion towards all living beings; for the will to live is simply a natural fact, and reverence for life, if related to it at all, can be related only as another natural fact. But he does essay the transition from fact to value.

Ethics consists therefore in my experiencing the compulsion to show to all will-to-live the same reverence as I do to my own. There we have given us that basic principle of the moral which is a necessity of thought: It is good to maintain and promote life; it is bad to destroy life or to obstruct it.<sup>2</sup>

In actual fact he does not give the same value to all will-to-live. He spends his life in Africa in warfare against forms of life that are injurious to the life of man. Not only so, but he speaks of sacrificing daily the lives of many small fishes to feed a young fish-eagle. The criterion by which he judges whether it is right to destroy either plant or animal life is "necessity". Necessity in the end comes to mean what is for the well-being of man. It is, however, difficult to discover on what principle the necessities of man take precedence over those of other creatures. The recognition of a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *My Life and Thought*, p. 270.

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scale of values among living creatures suggests that, to Dr. Schweitzer, even more fundamental than reverence for life is respect for personality, and that higher in the scale of ethical values than pity or compassion is love of neighbour. This is the Christian point of view. I think he is mistaken in saying that "the ethic of Reverence for life is the ethic of Love widened into universality. It is the ethic of Jesus, now recognized as a necessity of thought".<sup>1</sup>

If "humaneness" is recognized as a Christian virtue, it has come to be so in proportion as men have come to realize the obligations arising from their common humanity. Christians have been taught to love one another, and this has meant to respect one another's rights and needs and feelings; in short, one another's personalities. From this there has come concern for the well-being of all sentient creatures, beginning with those whose sensitivity and intelligence bring them nearest to man. It has extended downwards to forms of life where intelligence and feeling capacity are lower. This seems to be the true order. Respect for the lower forms of life does not always lead to respect for the higher. Schopenhauer lavished a great deal of affection on a poodle, but he remained a misanthrope, behaving with extreme harshness even to his own mother.

Let me put the conclusion quite simply. From the principle of love for neighbour, or of respect for personality (which is really an abstract or desiccated way of saying the same thing) one passes naturally to that regard which is due to life in its higher forms. From reverence for life in general there does not appear to be any natural transition to that love which should govern our relations with all our fellow-men, and with other sentient beings according to their place in the scale of values. This love finds its surest

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

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foundation in a love of God which, in turn, rests on a sense of what God is and what He has done for men. "We love Him because He first loved us"; because He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. On this the Christian ethic rests.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

“**I** BELIEVE in God.” With these familiar words the Christian is wont to begin the affirmation of his faith. It is an article of belief that to the Christian is vital and basal. The creeds go on to amplify this simple statement, setting forth what God is, what He has done and is doing, and what His purposes for the world and for His people are. But for the moment what concerns us is the simple fact that fundamental in Christianity is faith in God.

#### (1) GOD IN HINDUISM

A similar claim has been made for Hinduism. Here, for example, is a statement by Professor Radhakrishnan: “The one fact of life in India is the eternal being of God”.<sup>1</sup> He does not by this mean to suggest that belief in God is an article of the Hindu creed; for Hinduism has no official creed. Rather he is seeking to emphasize a spiritual tendency or characteristic, “the dominant character of the Indian mind”, he calls it, “which has coloured all its culture and moulded all its thoughts”. But it is only a tendency. There are schools of Indian philosophy approved as orthodox which have no place for God. The *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* is one of them. It has been said that in it *karma* occupies the place of God. Professor Radhakrishnan says of Jaimini, the author of the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* that “he does not so much deny God as ignore Him; no detail of the Vedic religion requires the assistance of God”.<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that “the lacuna in the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* was so unsatisfactory that the later

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 424.



writers slowly smuggled in God". But the classical *Mīmāṃsā* doctrine is "atheistic".<sup>1</sup>

. The same is true of another orthodox system, the *Sāṅkhya*. It is a dualistic system, which explains the world order by reference to two beings, *Purusha*, inadequately translated as Spirit, and *Prakṛiti*, inadequately translated as Nature. There is an indefinite multiplicity of *purushas*, and it is due to their entanglement in *prakṛiti* that both experience itself and an experienced world come into being. Deliverance from the limitations of individual existence is attained by a *purusha* through that insight by which it is enabled to discriminate itself from *prakṛiti*. But there is no place for God in the system.

It is worthy of note also that two religions which took their rise in India, and one of which still flourishes there, are "godless" religions. They are Buddhism and Jainism. It is true they are regarded as heretical, but this is not because of their denial of God, but because of their repudiation of the authority of the *Veda*, acceptance of which is the test of orthodoxy.

So, without for the present going into the question of the content of the idea of God, we have to face at the outset the fact that in Christianity and Hinduism radically different conceptions are held of the place of God in the religious life. This in itself places Hinduism and the religions derived from it in a class apart; for, normally, religion is concerned with the worship of God or of gods, regarding whom some more or less definite beliefs are held. It is not uncommon for Westerners to think of idolatry and polytheism as distinctive features of Hindu religion. They are certainly the most obtrusive features, for wherever one goes in India one sees images of the multitudinous gods of the Hindu pantheon in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 427.

great ornate temples and in little wayside shrines. Yet Professor Das Gupta says that "a little insight into the life of an ordinary Hindu of the present day will show that the system of image-worship is one that has been grafted upon his life, the regular, obligatory duties of which are ordered according to the old *Vedic* rites".<sup>1</sup> There will be differences of opinion as to which is the main stem and which is the graft; indeed as to whether the figure of grafting is applicable at all. Any figure that we may use is apt to be misleading, so let us leave aside figure and try to grasp the actual situation.

There is the Hinduism of the intellectuals and there is the Hinduism of the common people. These have never been rigidly separated, for the intellectuals have thought of Hinduism as a hospitable system which could receive into itself all kinds of religions with very little change, provided they were prepared to accommodate themselves to the social implications of the system. The consequence is that, within Hinduism, we find a multiplicity and variety of expressions of the religious life, from the unreflecting idolatrous worship which simple people pay to local gods or godlings, and the devotion of the great theistic systems, to the meditative absorption of the *Vedānta* philosopher, for which no image is needed.

## (2) HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HINDU IDEA OF GOD

The earliest Indian religion of which literary records have come down to us was polytheistic. The *Ṛig Veda*, the oldest and the most important of *Vedic* writings, consists largely of hymns of praise to gods, who are the objects of sacrificial worship. Most of them are closely associated with natural

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 11.

phenomena. The hymns breathe a frank delight in Nature and her gifts, and, except in the tenth Book, there is little that seems to point forward to the world-denying philosophy which was destined later to become so influential. But the *Rig Veda* does not represent the whole of the early religion of India. The *Yajur Veda* was devised for sacrificial purposes, and in it we have evidence of significant developments in the sacrificial system. The *Atharva Veda*, the latest of the four *Vedas*, contains material that may be more primitive than what is contained in the others, dealing as it does with spells and incantations. There were influences at work in the religion of the *Rig Veda* that might have led to monotheism. These worked in two different ways. On the one hand, there was occasional recognition of the fact that all the gods were manifestations of the one God.

To what is One sages give many a title:  
They call it *Agni*, *Yama*, *Mātariśvan*.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, we see, in places, the tendency which Max Müller has designated "henotheism", that attitude which while not denying the reality of other gods, treats one god as if he were God alone and supreme. But in the Tenth Book we see evidences of a different tendency, a tendency to a monistic, as distinct from a monotheistic, conception of divinity. For example, the Ultimate Reality is spoken of as That One (*Tad ekam*), born of *tapas*, or heat; and there is a famous passage dealing with the long-haired *munis*, who through ascetic practices attain super-normal powers.<sup>2</sup> Here we have fore-shadowings of another type of religion, practised in an atmosphere different from that of the rest of the *Rig Veda* and directed to a different end.

The *Brāhmaṇas* mark a further stage of development. They are not theological works, and what theology they

<sup>1</sup> *Rig Veda*, I, 164, 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 136.

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contain is unsystematic and confused. Their main concern is with the sacrifices, which are dealt with in the most elaborate detail. Into this detail I shall not enter but shall only remark that the efficacy of the sacrifices in themselves was so stressed that they tended to supersede the gods. The *ex opere operato* theory was maintained in its crudest form. This had great significance for the development of Indian religion. The peculiar conception of the causal sequence in accordance with which the sacrifices were held to operate is seen in the developed *karma* doctrine. And the substitution of the action of impersonal forces within the world order for the action of a personal God or gods was indicative of a tendency in religious thinking, not necessarily towards monism, but certainly away from any kind of theism.

A further development is marked in the *Āraṇyakas*, the "forest books", probably so called because they contain the teaching followed by men who had retired to the forest for meditation. In them the actual sacrifice was no longer the important thing. Indeed it was impossible for the forest-dweller to carry out the prescribed sacrificial procedure. The sacrifice became instead an object of meditation, and it was subjected to symbolic treatment. Religion was on the way to being regarded again as a spiritual exercise, though a spiritual exercise of a different kind from anything that had been known before.

The *Āraṇyakas* lead on to the *Upanishads*, which are the most important of all the *Vedic* writings. In them the great formative ideas of Hindu philosophical and religious thought come to expression. They are the last of the writings known as *śruti*, or revealed. They are in a double sense the *Vedānta*, the end of the *Veda*, as the latest in time and as the goal or fulfilment of the thought of the *Veda*. We find in them no systematic statement of doctrine, and all the orthodox

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schools of philosophy alike claim their authority. So do the various schools of religion. In the words of Professor Das Gupta:

The strongest current of thought which has found expression in the majority of the texts is this, that the Ātman or Brahman is the only reality, and that besides this everything else is unreal. The other current of thought which is to be found in many of the texts is the pantheistic creed that identifies the universe with the Ātman or Brahman. The third current is that of theism, which looks upon Brahman as the Lord controlling the world.<sup>1</sup>

The most important and influential doctrine is certainly the first of these. I refer now to two typical and familiar passages. The first is the famous passage in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*, where we have the story of how Śvetaketu returned to his home after twelve years spent in the house of a guru. He was puffed up with conceit, and his father, Uddālaka Āruṇi, seeing this, determined to put his knowledge to the test.

Have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?<sup>2</sup>

Of this Śvetaketu's teachers knew nothing, so his father proceeded to instruct him step by step in the deep things of the universe. He began with the one only without a second who was at the beginning. He thought "may I be many", and brought into being all the variety of phenomena which make up the world. Uddālaka went on to show how at the heart of all was a subtle essence, pervading all. This subtle essence was found to be the Self. So he enunciated what was to become familiar as the great text of the *Vedānta*, "*Tat tvam asi*", Thou art That.

The second passage is in the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*,

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Chhândogya Upanishad*, VI.

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where Yājñavalkya instructs his wife, Maitreyī, on the nature of the Self, ending with a denial of duality. With reference to the common belief that one perceives or knows another, he says:

How should he know another? How should he know Him by whom he knows all this? That Self is to be described as "Neti, neti" (No, no). He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended; he is imperishable, for he cannot perish; he is unattached, for he cannot attach himself; unfettered, he does not suffer, he does not fail. How, O beloved, should he know the Knower?<sup>1</sup>

These passages are typical. The first, though it provides us with what was to be the great text of the *Vedānta*, might also be claimed as an expression of pantheistic doctrine; and in the same *Upanishad* there are other passages in which the same doctrine seems to be enunciated even more plainly. But what is much more important is the fact that systematizers took up the unsystematic thought of the *Upanishads*, and found in it material which they were able to fashion into closely knit systems. Different schools of thinkers fashioned it according to a variety of patterns, so that we have the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, with the varieties of interpretation to which they have been subjected. Infinitely more influential than all the others and infinitely more pervasive in its influence has been the school of *Vedāntic* monism, of which the great exponent was Śaṅkarāchārya.

### (3) GOD IN THE VEDĀNTA

Some time not later than the second century A.D. the *Vedānta* principles in the *Upanishads* were crystallized in the *Vedānta Sūtras* by Bādarāyaṇa. These short cryptic utterances required interpretation and more than one interpretation was offered. The greatest of all interpreters was

<sup>1</sup> *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*, IV, 5, 15.

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Śaṅkarāchārya, who lived in the ninth century. I am by no means forgetful of the fact that Rāmānuja, who lived some three centuries later, interpreted the same *sūtras* in a different sense, finding in them the basis for a theistic doctrine. But the influence of Śaṅkara was and is so dominating that at this stage I propose to concentrate on his point of view. To this day in philosophical and theological discussions one is not able to get away from it. The assumption is continually being made by Indian thinkers that all other truth is subordinate to the great truth *Tat tvam asi*.

Śaṅkarāchārya wrote elaborate commentaries not only on the *Vedānta Sūtras* but on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and a whole library of books has been produced dealing with what he wrote. But the essence of his doctrine has often been put in small space. For example, here are sayings quoted by Max Müller:

In one half verse I shall tell you what has been taught in thousands of volumes: Brahman is true, the world is false, the soul is Brahman and nothing else;

and

There is nothing worth gaining, there is nothing worth enjoying, there is nothing worth knowing but Brahman alone, for he who knows Brahman is Brahman.<sup>1</sup>

But there is much more to be said about the matter than this, otherwise the massive volumes which have been devoted to it would never have been written, and the endless discussions which have gathered around it would never have been begun. We all know that in his efforts after a satisfying relationship with God the plain man is in danger of conceiving Him as a being like himself, but only better and greater. This crude anthropomorphism is not difficult to refute. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our

<sup>1</sup> *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 122.

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ways His ways. There is truth and value in the way of negation. Śaṅkarāchārya and his followers followed it to the very end, and were led to the conclusion that nothing can be predicated of Brahman at all. He, or it, is *nirguṇa*, without qualities. It is told that one Vashkali went to Bāhva with the request: "Teach me, most reverend sir, the nature of Brahman". Bāhva remained silent until the request was repeated a second and a third time, and then he replied: "I teach you indeed but you do not understand; the Ātman is silence".<sup>1</sup> This is intelligible, all except the breaking of silence to explain its significance. If Brahman alone is, to predicate anything of it, even silence, is to misrepresent it.

But this is, of course, the inevitable paradox which everyone who denies the possibility of predicating anything of the divine has to face. All discussion ceases if the full implications of qualitylessness are accepted. Actually Śaṅkara characterized Brahman as *sat*, or existence, and *chit*, or intelligence; and to these the later *Vedānta* added *ānanda*, or bliss, making the compound *sachchidānanda*. Śaṅkara also characterized it as *akshara*, the imperishable, and he quotes with approval the saying of Yājñavalkya:

That Brahman is unseen but seeing; unperceived but perceiving; unknown but knowing. There is nothing that sees but it, nothing that hears but it, nothing that perceives but it, nothing that knows but it.<sup>2</sup>

In this and in other such sayings we have rather pointers than predicates, for there is no attempt to define the nature of Brahman, which is regarded as essentially undefinable.

Bound up with the *Vedānta* view of the Absolute is the distinctive teaching regarding the phenomenal world. When Brahman is spoken of as "unseen but seeing" and so on, it

<sup>1</sup> Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*, III, 8, 11.



must not be supposed that it is perceiver or knower in relation to a real objective world. The objective world, including everything to which predicates can be applied, is *māyā*; it is a product of ignorance or nescience, a mere illusory appearance. The term *māyā* used in this sense appears for the first time in one of the latest of the classical *Upanishads*; but the idea which it expresses was implicit in much of the *Upanishadic* thought regarding the relation of *Ātman* and *Brahman*. Reality is veiled by the *upādhis*, or limitations, and it shines out only as these fall away. The limitations include everything that belongs to the empirical realm, physical and psychical. All is ultimately non-existent. There can therefore be no question of creation, for the non-existent is not created. In so far as the phenomenal is thought of as having illusory being, it may be spoken of as due to *Brahman's* magical power or to his sport. But this language is purely figurative, for he can have no real causal relationship to it. Further, there can be nothing of the nature of divine providence, for the whole round of *samsāra* in which the individual under the determination of *karma* is involved, is itself part of the illusion.

The *Vedānta* way of conceiving God, or of holding Him to be inconceivable, is not without parallels in the religious and philosophical thought of the West. It has been suggested that the Neo-Platonists derived their thought of God as so completely transcendent that nothing can be predicated of Him, from Indian sources, but there does not seem to be sufficient reason for this suggestion. Through Dionysius the Areopagite this line of thought came into the Christian Church, and from his time there has been a great succession of mystics, some of whom have followed the *via negativa* almost as far as the Vedāntists. We find them to-day in various branches of the Church, but more frequently in no

Church. Here are words from a modern Roman Catholic writer that might pass for the utterance of an Indian Advaitist:

In prayer always—and out of prayer also—the mainspring of everything is wholly irrational, meaningless, inexpressible. “I want God”—and the word “God” has absolutely no meaning. I find so many in this positively absurd and obviously mystical condition: I suppose one “contemplates” without knowing it. . . . The only object of life becomes to want nothing that is not God. Only there is no reason for it. The word God means nothing—which is, of course, theologically quite correct, since God is nothing that we can think or conceive.<sup>1</sup>

*Vedānta* doctrine also has manifest affinities with the Absolutism of Bradley and his school, but there are differences which it would carry me too far out of my way to attempt to set forth now. I shall mention only one or two of the most striking of them. It has sometimes been thought that *māyā* is identical with the “Appearance” of Bradley. Actually, while Bradley holds that the Absolute is immanent in the appearances, Śāṅkara holds that Brahman alone is and that all else is not simply appearance but non-existent. There are passages in the *Upanishads* which may provide support for a different doctrine, but Śāṅkara’s view is certainly not that of Bradley. Further, Bradley holds a doctrine of degrees of truth and reality. The Absolute is perfect, and as such can have no degrees; but among appearances there are differences according as they are separated by a greater or smaller interval from all-inclusiveness of self-consistency. The *Vedānta* may seem to agree with this. It recognizes that the ordered experiences of rational, waking life have a truth and a reality that do not belong to dreams or to figments of the imagination. It recognizes also the validity of the structure of scientific truth. But all this belongs to the sphere of the phenomenal;

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Letters of Dom Chapman*, p. 248.

and ultimately the phenomenal does not exist. There would have been, for Śaṅkara, no meaning in Bradley's statement that: "the truth and the fact, which, to be converted into the Absolute, would require less re-arrangement and addition, is more real and truer".<sup>1</sup> Śaṅkara finds in the phenomenal no pathway to reality. The individual finds deliverance only when he escapes from the illusion.

#### (4) HINDU THEISM

I shall not at this stage dwell on the alternative interpretation of the *Vedānta Sūtras* given by Rāmānuja. He did not repudiate the monistic position, but accepted it with qualifications. Brahman, according to him, is not *nirguṇa*, without qualities, but he is possessed of all auspicious qualities. He repudiates the *māyā* doctrine as taught by Śaṅkara. Individual souls and material objects are "modes" of Brahman, but they have a certain relative independence. And the individual soul finds its fulfilment, not in identification with Brahman, but in eternal fellowship with Him.

Theism has suffered in India through being taken under the patronage of the Advaitists. There is a remarkable passage in Professor Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy* which is relevant to this:

Theism of the type advocated by Rāmānuja is what even Śaṅkara allows in life and religion. It is the faith of Hinduism, whether in its *vaiṣṇava*, *smārta*, *śaiva* or *śākta* form. It is strange that Western thinkers and critics should overlook this striking fact and persist in foisting on Hinduism as a whole the theory of abstract monism.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Radhakrishnan may be right in his last statement, but he is certainly wrong in believing that the kind of

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 712.

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theism that Śaṅkarāchārya allows should be expected to satisfy any convinced theist. Śaṅkara provides a place for the worship of Īśvara, the Lord, but its place is within the sphere of *aparā vidyā*, or lower knowledge. Only the knowledge of Brahman can be classed as *parā vidyā*, or higher knowledge; and over against it the lower knowledge has not even relative truth. It is simply false. With this no true theist can come to terms. He worships God, eternal and almighty, with the firm conviction that he is in touch with the highest reality, and that there is no higher reality in the light of which even God fades out.

In our own days the *Vedānta* point of view has been arousing considerable interest, and its thought of God in particular has been finding acceptance in certain circles which formerly were not wont to give much attention to religion of any kind. One is sometimes given the impression that it is a little less than intellectually respectable to believe in a personal God. The saying of Xenophanes is being frequently quoted to the effect that men make gods in their own image, those of the Ethiopians being black and snub-nosed, and those of the Thracians having blue eyes and red hair, and that if horses or oxen or lions had hands and could produce works of art, they too would represent the gods after their own fashion. Actually if horses or oxen or lions had not only hands but minds they would think of God with the help of the highest categories with which thought provides them, not with the help of the lowest images from the physical realm. There is an anthropomorphism which is utterly childish, but which nevertheless is very widespread. We find it in primitive religions in the worship of gods which are truly made in the image of men. We find it at times even within the Christian Church. Every now and again we get a shock of surprise at the discovery

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that some otherwise ordinarily intelligent person has never advanced beyond the thought of God as a greatly magnified man.

But there are greater errors in religious thinking than anthropomorphism. The crude anthropomorphist has lost his way in an endeavour after a great truth. If we are to think of God at all, we do so most truly in terms of the highest that we know. God is most faithfully represented as a Person. Those who deny this often do so under the belief that personality involves limitations which cannot be applicable to the Supreme Being. Here, for example, is a curious account of what personality may be conceived to mean from Mr. Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means*:

A person has passions and caprices; and it is therefore natural that he should do odd things—clamour for the hearts of sacrificial victims, demand the persecution of the Jews, threaten destruction to whole cities because a few of their inhabitants happen to be homosexuals.<sup>1</sup>

If it be of the essence of personality to have passions and caprices and to do odd things of the kind which Mr. Huxley mentions, then no respectable thinker would feel any pride in the possession of personality: still less would he seek to attribute personality to God. But he is taking personality not in its *essential characteristics* but in its lowest manifestations. There are criminals and lunatics in the world of human persons, but we do not regard them as ideal or representative persons. In integrated personalities we have the crown of creation, and I think it may be claimed that the most completely integrated personalities are those which are indwelt by the Spirit of God. This God is not made in the image of man, but man was made in His image; which is a fundamentally different thing.

<sup>1</sup> *Ends and Means*, p. 242.

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It is the easiest thing in the world, by following the way of negation, to reach conclusions which seem to rule out the possibility of the attribution of personality even in the higher sense to God, or indeed of His being knowable at all. We do well to bear in mind the saying of Aquinas, that nothing can be predicated univocally of God and other beings.<sup>1</sup> When we think of God as good, we do not attribute to Him virtues identical in their manifestation with those which characterize good men in a social environment. When we think of God as love, we do not think of this love as identical with ordinary human affection. When we think of God as having plans and purposes, we have to remember that He does not live and work within the limitations of time, with ends not yet realized but to be worked towards. Aquinas maintains, I think truly, that "things said alike of God and of other beings are not said either in quite the same sense, or in a totally different sense, but in an analogous sense".<sup>2</sup> What seems to me to be above all important is that in our efforts to exalt God we should not speak of Him in terms predicable of dead matter or reduce Him to a practical non-entity. Thus, whatever difficulties there may be in conceiving what is the nature of God's consciousness, we do not exalt but degrade Him by thinking of Him as unconscious. And it is a strange way of exalting the Supreme Being to speak of Him as "*it*", for by so doing we treat Him as one who must always be an object, never Subject. Those who do so may seem to themselves to have escaped from the error of anthropomorphism, but they have done so at the cost of falling into the still greater error of hylomorphism. We may hold that God is super-personal, and if we do so we shall be able to quote good Scriptural authority in support of our position: "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself"

<sup>1</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

(Isa. 45: 15). "For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" (Rom. 11: 34). He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6: 15 f.). But God, so conceived, is supra-personal, not sub-personal. The Christian recognizes that all his language about Him is inadequate, but not false. He knows God as one who enters into personal relations with His children, who has His purposes of good in relation to them, and who calls them to be fellow-workers with Him in the realization of these purposes. One does not need to be a Barthian to appreciate the truth of Professor Karl Barth's words about the personality of God:

God is personal, but personal in an *incomprehensible* way, in so far as the conception of His personality surpasses all our views of personality. This is so, just because He and He alone is a true, real and genuine person. Were we to overlook this and try to conceive God in our own strength according to our conception of personality, we should make an idol out of God.<sup>1</sup>

I have dwelt on this at some length, because I believe that we have here an issue of first-class importance on which it is essential that we clear our minds. The Christian can have nothing to do with either a qualityless Absolute or the doctrine of *māyā*. The world is not a mere bubble thrown off by God in sport. It is God's creation, and however men may have sought to obstruct Him, He still has His gracious purposes toward it, which no sin or folly of men can defeat. Difficulties enough beset any attempt to understand the world, and we are living in an age in which new difficulties have been obtruded on us. But human life becomes meaningful when we know ourselves to be living in a world which God made, which He still informs, and within which He has

<sup>1</sup> *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, pp. 31 f.

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work for us to do in His service. Life must have an entirely different complexion for the man who thinks of the Supreme as beyond human ken, and of the world which he does know as having no relation to the divine purpose, but as something simply to be escaped from. The Hindu mind is marvellously hospitable, and it is prepared to provide a place side by side for beliefs which seem to be in flat contradiction to each other. It is reluctant to face up to an either-or. But here a decision must be taken.

### (a) *Revelation* (5) GOD IN CHRISTIANITY

So far I may appear to have said nothing that is distinctively Christian, nothing that might not be accepted by any theist, for example by Rabindranath Tagore. I believe, however, that the man who has committed himself to belief in the personality of God has committed himself to a great deal more. He has committed himself to the beliefs not only that God created the world and that He has a plan in history, but to the belief that commerce between the divine Spirit and the human spirit is at least possible. This implies revelation, for any kind of commerce means reciprocal activity. The God to whom man speaks is a God who speaks to man: indeed man is able to speak to God at all because God has first spoken to him.

I am speaking of the logical implications of belief in the personality of God, not of the stages by which in the experience either of the individual or of the race God comes to be known. It is not usual for men to be led to any kind of religious faith simply by intellectual arguments. Just as a man sees the world about him, not as the result of a study of the science of Optics, but simply by opening his eyes and looking about him, so men, sometimes quite simple and



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unlearned, have looked out upon the world and in upon their own souls, and have seen in both the hand of God at work. Without that direct apprehension of God, all argument about Him is vain. Further, as the sun furnishes the light which is the medium of ordinary vision, so God has sent forth His Light to guide men to Himself. This was the faith of the prophets, as they surveyed the events which took place about them. It was Amos who wrote: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets". And all of them spoke and wrote not as men setting forth theories of the nature of God, or of His action in history, but as bearers of a message from God Himself. Their words were: "Thus saith the Lord". These messages, communicated to them, as they were convinced, by God Himself, were apprehended not by any process of ratiocination, but by that spiritual insight which, in the Bible, is designated faith. The Bible is the record of God's revelation of Himself to the great seers and prophets and saints of Israel. Revelation has never been closed. It is because God speaks to us now that we are able to realize that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Spirit of God"; and reciprocally we find in the record of past revelation a norm by reference to which we may interpret God's activity in the world to-day.

We have here something which is fundamental to the Christian religion. It is expressed perhaps most simply and directly in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews in these words: "Many were the forms and fashions in which God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these days at the end He has spoken to us by a Son—a Son whom He has appointed heir of the universe, as it was by Him that He created the world". There is nothing strictly comparable to this in Hinduism. There is certainly a doctrine of revela-

tion, but it applies to the ancient *Vedic* Scriptures, which are accepted as *śruti* or heard, in contrast with the later writings which are known as *smṛiti* or remembered. Max Müller says: “*Śrutam* or *Śruti* came afterwards to mean what has been revealed, exactly as we understand the word, while *Smṛitam* or *Smṛiti* comprised all that was recognized as possessing human authority only.”<sup>1</sup> This is a deeply mistaken understanding of the meaning of revelation as the term is used by the writers of the Christian Scriptures. Revelation is of God Himself, not of truths about Him, and it is the communication of Person to persons. The Hebrew and Christian conception that the mind and heart of God are revealed in events within the temporal order is repugnant to the dominant tendencies in Hindu thought, according to which the Eternal is concealed, not revealed, by the temporal.

### (b) *Incarnation*

The Christian idea of Incarnation is even more remote from anything that finds a place in Hindu thought. Not that the idea of incarnation in itself is foreign to Hinduism. At least two centuries before Christ, Rāma and Kṛishṇa, who originally were warrior heroes, had come to be regarded as *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, and at a later stage of the Supreme Brahman. Still later the list of *avatāras* was extended, and it came to be believed that in each *kalpa* or world-period there were ten *avatāras*, and the list continued to grow. These were not all in human form. Among them were animal or semi-animal incarnations, such as *Matsya* (the fish), *Kūrma* (the tortoise), and *Narasimha* (the man-lion). We are here manifestly far away from the Christian idea, and any claim to an approximation to it can be made with any plausibility only on behalf of the Kṛishṇa of

<sup>1</sup> *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 2.

the *Bhagavad-gītā*, into whose mouth is put the religious and ethical teaching which to this day is regarded as the loftiest in all Hindu writings. For the rest, it is not claimed that in them the essential nature of God is revealed. The *avatāra*-idea is found compatible with belief in a Supreme Being who is without attributes and who does not act, on the ground that all His apparent activity is merely *līlā* or sport, which produces no *karma*, and affects Him in no other way. So it came about that not only among the Vaishṇavites but among the Śaivites the idea spread and developed, until all great religious teachers came to be regarded as in some sense *avatāras*.

If the familiar teaching about *avatāras* fails to point the way to the Christian doctrine of incarnation, it has been suggested that there is another line of thought which, without the use of this terminology, does lead to a bridge by which the separation may be overcome. For example, in his translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Professor Radhakrishnan writes:

Though the *Gītā* accepts the belief in *avatāra* as the Divine limiting Himself for some purpose on earth, possessing in His limited form the fullness of knowledge, it also lays stress on the eternal *avatāra*, the God in man, the Divine consciousness always present in the human being.<sup>1</sup>

Again he writes:

It is not a peculiar relation between any one chosen individual and God but an ultimate one binding every self to God.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is radically different, on the one hand, from a doctrine that the sole reality is Brahman and that "I am Brahman"; and, on the other hand, from the doctrine that God is so completely

<sup>1</sup> *The Bhagavad-gītā*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 104.

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immanent in the universe that in every event and in every part of it He is equally manifested. It is a doctrine that in a world in which much had gone wrong, but in which God never left Himself without a witness, He appeared in the person of One who shared to the full our human nature. This was not a theophany of the kind with which we have been made familiar in many mythologies; nor was it a mere manifestation of virtue or power of the kind which has often led to the deification of the man who manifested it. From their first intercourse with Him, Christ's disciples were aware that never man spake like this man and that no man ever did the deeds which He did. More than this, in His own Person He brought God to them and them to God. His words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" described exactly their own experience. It was not abstract doctrine but living experience which St. Paul expressed when he wrote that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"; and it was in interpretation of this experience that he wrote:

Though He was divine by nature He did not snatch at equality with God, but emptied Himself by taking the nature of a servant; born in human guise and appearing in human form, He humbly stooped in His obedience even to die, and to die upon the Cross (Phil. 2: 6-8, Moffatt's translation).

The Incarnation was unique and incapable of repetition. That does not mean that it marks the end of God's gracious activities in the world. He continues to work in an infinite number of ways, and in a special way through the Church and through the lives of men and women which have been thrown open to the influences of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has proved to be liable to great abuse, but not by those who have accepted with understanding the statement in the Nicene Creed that the Spirit "proceedeth from the Father and the Son". If anyone is

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tempted to interpret the immanence of God as meaning that all the events of nature or all the activities of men are equally His work, he will find a corrective in the words of Christ describing the work of the Holy Spirit: "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you".

## CHAPTER 5

### HUMAN DESTINY: DELIVERANCE OR REDEMPTION

EVERY religion professes to provide a remedy for the deepest of the ills which afflict human life, but the great religions differ in their understanding of what these ills are and of the way in which they are to be removed. It is assumed that something is lacking in human life, or something has gone wrong with it. But what is the root of the trouble? What is the remedy for it? What happens when the remedy is successfully applied? There are those who tell us that the more intelligent exponents of all religions give answers to these questions which are essentially the same. Here, for example, are words of Professor Radhakrishnan:

It is the aim of religion to lift us from our momentary meaningless provincialism to the significance and status of the eternal, to transform the chaos and confusion of life to that pure and immortal essence which is its ideal possibility. . . . The divinizing of the life of man in the individual and the race is the dream of the great religions. It is the *moksa* of the Hindus, the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddhists, the kingdom of heaven of the Christians. It is for Plato the life of the untroubled perception of the pure idea.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that whatever differences there may be between the Vedānta and Buddhist metaphysics, they hold out the promise of a deliverance which for all practical purposes is the same. But the Christian doctrine is different, and there is no alchemy by which it can be resolved into either the Vedāntist or the Buddhist. The attempt is continually being made in India, but it is never made without violence being done to plain Christian doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 123 f.

(1) DELIVERANCE FROM WHAT?

From what does man need deliverance? The typical Hindu answer is that it is from the limitations of finite personal existence. This is what Professor Radhakrishnan means by "our momentary meaningless provincialism". We have seen that according to the teaching of all schools of Hindu thought man passes from birth to birth, his fortune being determined in each new embodiment by the deeds which he has previously done. The prospect of an indefinite number of lives and deaths fills the minds of most Hindus with horror; and deliverance means, by whatever name it is called, or however in detail the process by which it is believed to be achieved may vary, release from the bonds which tie the individual to the wheel of *karma* and *saṃsāra*. Here is one statement, from the *Kātha Upanishad*:

When all desires which dwell in his heart cease, then the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman.

When all the ties of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal.<sup>1</sup>

But it is not only the heart that has to be disengaged from the things of sense and time. Even more characteristically it is the cognitive faculties. Here is a passage from the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* which brings this into clear light:

When he has departed there is no more knowledge. . . . For when there is, as it were, duality, then one sees the other, one smells the other, one hears the other, one salutes the other, one perceives the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all this, how should he smell another, how should he see another, how should he hear another, how should he salute another, how should he perceive another, how should he know another? How should he know him by whom he knows all this? How, O beloved, should he know (himself the knower)?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Kātha Upanishad*, II, vi, 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, II, iv, 12, 13.

Deliverance means the breaking down of the illusion of duality, and the intuition of the identity of the self with Brahman. This is essentially a cognitive process, but it is more than that. It is not a matter of intellectually apprehending and assenting to the proposition, "I am Brahman", for there is recognition of the duality of subject and predicate in the very assertion of their identity. The experience in which the identity becomes a real thing is one which goes deeper than any merely intellectual experience.

## (2) DELIVERANCE IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS

But this may be an over-simplification of the case, for there are six orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy. They are more than contributions to the understanding of the truth about reality. They are known as *darśanas*, a word which it is almost impossible to translate. The nearest equivalent would be "views" if this word had not come in modern English to have the meaning of opinions formed largely on subjective grounds. Indian thinkers thought more highly of their views, believing themselves to have attained to a real objective vision of reality. But, what is even more important for our present discussion, each *darśana* is not simply a system of philosophical doctrine, addressed to the intellect. It is a system of what we might call "saving truth", for its central purpose is the demonstration of the way to deliverance from *saṁsāra* and all its implications.

It is no part of my plan to give an exposition of the six systems. I shall not even try to deal in more than the most cursory way with their teaching about deliverance. But it may be of interest to note the different terms by which the Schools designate what they set forth as the end of man's being. The Vedānta calls it *moksha*, or liberation. I shall not



repeat what I have said already about the *advaita* philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya, beyond remarking that liberation takes place when the individual knows himself as one with Brahman. The dualistic Sāṅkhya and Yoga call it *kaivalya*, or isolation. As I have already remarked, it is the entanglement of *Purusha* (spirit) in *Prakṛiti* (nature) that leads to the appearance of an external world, to the illusion of individuality and to transmigration from one body to another. It is by an act of discriminative apprehension that the illusion is destroyed. The drama ends when *Purusha* knows *Prakṛiti* as unreal, or more accurately when it knows itself as alone real. It then stands in *kaivalya*, and for it there can be no return. The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika call it *apavarga*, or escape. These two closely related systems give their own accounts of the structure of the universe, one of the features of which is an atomic theory reminiscent in some of its details of that of Democritus. From the world-order, with its pleasure and pain and the *samsāra* in which the individual is involved, a way of escape is provided through knowledge.

These five systems, differing in many details, are at one in the general picture which they present of the meaning of deliverance—of the process by which it is attained and of the nature of the experience itself (the word “experience” being used for lack of a better). The ordinary intellectual Hindu does not regard them as being in opposition to each other, but he sees them as complementary. From the days of Mādhava, the author of *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha*, it has been not unusual to arrange the systems in a series at the top of which is the *advaita*, the other systems finding their places according to their approximation to it, the full-orbed sun of truth. We have here an attitude to life that has had and continues to have an influence which it would be difficult to

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exaggerate, an influence which is operative in the minds of many to whom the teachings of the different Schools are a sealed book.

In this brief reference to deliverance in the philosophical systems there are certain things which I have passed over for simplicity of exposition. Of them something must now be said.

### (3) DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

#### (a) *Karma Mīmāṃsā*

Firstly, I have omitted all reference to the *Karma Mīmāṃsā*, which is accepted as one of the six *darśanas*. Its peculiarity is that it prescribes a system of ritual works, though works in themselves were never regarded as capable of leading to more than a temporal reward. It was given the alternative name of *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*—the *Pūrva* or earlier *Mīmāṃsā*—in the sense that it was a propædæutic to the *Vedānta*, which was known as the *Uttara* (or later) *Mīmāṃsā*. But in its development it came to have its own distinctive doctrine of deliverance through knowledge, a knowledge which supervened on the right performance of ritual works. So the *Karma Mīmāṃsā*, in spite of its name, is in line with the other *darśanas* in its general attitude to life and to deliverance.

#### (b) *Yoga*

Secondly, I have omitted all reference to the distinctive features of the *Yoga*. This is a system which the casual student has often greatly misunderstood, believing it to be concerned with the exercise of all kinds of occult powers. Actually what differentiates it from the other systems is the fact that it sets forth a whole graded scheme of exercises, physical and psychical, which serve as a preparatory disci-

pline to the individual in his desire for deliverance. Stage by stage the soul is led on its way until finally it reaches *samādhi*, or meditative absorption. In the highest form of *samādhi*, *Puruṣa* is no longer distracted from its true being by the allurements of *Prakṛiti*, and rests in itself alone. This is deliverance; and it is to be noted that there is no departure from the general pattern which I have been describing. Deliverance is still attained through knowledge—discriminative knowledge.

### (c) *Rāmānuja*

Lastly, in what I have said about the *Vedānta* I have omitted all reference to any other interpretation of the *Vedānta Sūtras* than that given by Śaṅkarāchārya. I have already mentioned Rāmānuja's doctrine of God. His Commentaries on the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad-gītā* have an importance for the doctrine of deliverance not less than the works of Śaṅkarāchārya. If anyone holds that the doctrines differ only superficially and that they are fundamentally the same, one can only reply that this was certainly not the point of view of Rāmānuja himself, who controverted with the greatest vigour some of the most important points in Śaṅkara's teaching. In particular, he denies that deliverance means losing one's identity in Brahman. In one place he puts this briefly and pointedly:

To be refunded into Brahman as an earthen vessel is refunded into its own causal substance, *i.e.*, clay, means nothing else but complete annihilation.<sup>1</sup>

Positively he characterizes the experience of the released soul as follows:

That which is not within change, *i.e.*, the highest Brahman which is free from all change and of an absolutely perfect and

<sup>1</sup> *Vedānta Sūtras with Rāmānuja's Commentary*, I, 4, 21.

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blessed nature—this, together with the manifestations of its glory, is what forms the object of consciousness for the released soul. . . . For Scripture declares that the released soul thus abides within, *i.e.* is conscious of the changeless highest Brahman; “when he finds freedom from fear and an abode in that which is invisible, incorporeal, undefined, unsupported, then he obtains the fearlessness.” (Tait. Up. II, 7).<sup>1</sup>

In Rāmānuja we see a real departure from the pattern which the philosophical systems generally follow. Actually we see in him a fusion of philosophical influences—from *Upaniṣadic* thought and the monistic philosophy which was crystallized out of it—with influences which came from the great popular *bhakti* movement. In him the whole approach is from the religious rather than from the philosophical side. *Bhakti* religion found its origin in the deep needs and longings in the hearts of ordinary men and women. The philosophical schools took little notice of it, beyond recognizing it as a lower way, which the fully enlightened man would leave behind. But the *Bhagavad-gītā*, one of the most eclectic religious works ever written, while commending the way of knowledge as leading to deliverance, commends also the way of *bhakti*, and the way of works, provided that they be done without attachment to the fruit of works. Between the *Bhagavad-gītā* and Rāmānuja there were great successions of saints and teachers, and great companies of devotees, who followed the *bhakti-mārga*. Rāmānuja was heir to this double inheritance. He in turn influenced the development both of philosophical thought and of religious practice.

It has to be admitted that the monistic heritage still lies heavily on Rāmānuja. It is still from *karma* and *saṃsāra* and from the nescience which gives them being that deliverance is sought. Also, at least in his *Commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras*, it is through knowledge that release is said

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 4, 19.

to come. But against these facts there are certain other facts to which due weight must be given. Firstly, release comes not through knowledge of a qualityless Brahman, but through knowledge of a Lord possessed of all auspicious qualities. Secondly, though it may be difficult to reconcile this with other parts of his teaching, in his exposition of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Rāmānuja makes his own language which is used in the *Gītā* about the function of divine grace in bringing deliverance. *Prapatti*—drawing near to God, “self-abandonment to God”, as Otto translates it—is the one requirement for the attainment of deliverance. Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, there is the destiny of the delivered soul. It is not, as Rāmānuja himself expresses it, being refunded into its causal substance, but it is the enjoyment through eternity of communion with God.

#### (4) DELIVERANCE IN SOUTH INDIAN VAISHNAVISM

Professor Rudolf Otto gave long and close study to the South India *Vaishnavite* movement, which was in the direct line of Rāmānuja’s influence, and some part of the results of that study is contained in his little book, *India’s Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted*. He was greatly impressed by this movement and by the similarities which he found in it between much of its thought and Christian ideas. These similarities came out most strikingly in their accounts of redemption. Here is what he says about this:

What is the good conferred in salvation by Christianity? Communion with the living personal God. What is the means of salvation? Grace, *gratia* and *gratia sola*, which lays hold of the lost, rescuing and redeeming him. Now these are the very slogans and distinctive terms of those forms of the *bhakti*-religion of which we are to speak.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *India’s Religion of Grace*, p. 17.

He continues:

There seems to have arisen in India a competitor of almost astonishing similarity—a competitor which seems to dispute the sole possession by Christianity of that which is its very heart—first the salvation which comes not from profound speculation and for the wise, but is offered to all; secondly the salvation which comes not by mystic experiences, by the loss of our personality in the impersonal primal cause of all being, but by *bhakti* . . . ; and thirdly, the salvation which comes not through the toil of good “works”, but is the free gift of grace, and by the saving might of “the Lord”.<sup>1</sup>

Here the case is put in a general way, but he goes on to discuss in detail some of the most striking parallels between the two religions; in their conceptions of God and the spiritual life, of election and divine grace, of a “fall”, of the use of the means of grace, of blessedness in this life. But it is in the treatment of the relation of faith and works to grace that the most remarkable similarities appear. These come to light not least clearly in the differences which developed among Rāmānuja’s followers. They divided into two schools, the Northern and the Southern School. They both held that *prapatti* brings deliverance, but they differed as to the mode by which it operates. The Northern School held that *prapatti* was only one of the means by which salvation might be attained, and that the following of it involved the use of human co-operation. They were labelled the *markata nyāya*, or Monkey School, because of the resemblance of the process of deliverance as described by them to what happens when a mother monkey carries its young. She carries it in her arms, but it co-operates by clinging to its mother. The Southern School, on the other hand, regarded *prapatti* as the only means, and held that its action involved no co-operation on the part of the soul. They were known as the *mārjāra nyāya*, or Cat School, because of the analogy with the passive way

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17 f.

in which a kitten is carried by its mother. These opposing points of view have so close a resemblance to differences that have appeared within the Church in regard to the operation of divine grace, between synergists and monergists, that it is not surprising that the question has been raised whether here Christian influence was at work. Actually there is no evidence of this.

#### (5) DELIVERANCE IN OTHER BHAKTI SYSTEMS

It is in South Indian *Vaishnavism* that one finds the most striking resemblances to features in Christianity. But the spirit which inspired it was not confined either to *Vaishnavism* or to South India. The doctrines of the grace of God in the person of Śiva, and of *bhakti* as man's response to it, were taught in South India as early as the eleventh century by Māṇikka Vāṣagar, and his teaching and influence were continued in the *Śaiva Siddhānta*. In the same century we see the beginnings of a popular *bhakti* movement in North India, and under a variety of influences, including Muslim, it developed later in different directions. Notably there emerged three groups, Rāmaite, Kṛishṇaite and deistic. Differing in many things, they were united in their faith in a personal God, a God of grace, and in their belief that by His grace there was offered to all men a salvation in which personality would not be extinguished but would find its highest fulfilment. We have evidence in them of a deep and true piety, and in some of their writings of a sense of sin and of the need for deliverance from it even more profound than in the writings of the South Indian *Vaishnavites*. Here, for example, are words from Dādu, a sixteenth century mystic of Central India, who belonged to the deistic group:

I have neglected God's service: a sinful servant am I;  
There is no other so foul as I am.

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I offend in every act. I fail in every duty,

I sin against Thee every moment. Pardon my transgressions.<sup>1</sup>

Or here is Tukārām, the Maratha saint and poet of the seventeenth century, who was in the line of the *Kṛishnaite* tradition:

Fallen of fallen, thrice fallen am I; but do Thou raise me by Thy power. I have neither purity of heart, nor a faith firmly set at Thy feet; I am created out of sin, how oft shall I repeat it? says Tukā.<sup>2</sup>

### (6) REDEMPTION: CHRISTIAN AND HINDU

It is good that so much of the best of this literature is being made available in English translations, for it is well worthy of study and no serious person can study it without being deeply impressed. Our Hindu friends sometimes tell us that whatever differences there may be between the Christian and the Hindu points of view in regard to deliverance, they are not fundamental. The Christian seeks redemption from sin; so also does the Hindu. In support of this they will quote not only from the *bhakti* writers, but even from the *Vedānta*. There is such a passage as that which Śāṅkara quotes from the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, in setting forth the ethical pre-conditions to saving knowledge:

He therefore that knows it, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient, and collected, sees self in Self, sees all as Self. Evil does not overcome him, he overcomes all evil, free from spots, free from doubt, he becomes a (true) Brāhman.<sup>3</sup>

If deliverance from the round of births and deaths cannot be alleged to be an element in the Christian idea of redemption, it is at least claimed that in Christianity, as much as in Hinduism, the experiences of life are looked upon as an evil to be escaped from. There are Scriptural passages like:

They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Heb. 11: 13);

<sup>1</sup> *A Sixteenth Century Indian Mystic*, Orr, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *The Poems of Tukārām*, Fraser and Marathe, Vol. I, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, LV, iv, 23.



and

All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2: 16).

It is true that in the course of the history of Christianity there have been those who have regarded the world itself as to be fled no less than "the evil which is in the world". There have been monks and eremites and ascetics who seem to have been almost as anxious as any Hindu *sannyāsi* to avoid all contact with the world. And apart altogether from monasticism, in widely sundered sections of the Christian Church one finds those to whom a saying like that of Archbishop Temple, that Christianity is the "most materialistic of all religions", appears to be frank blasphemy. Within recent months a Member of Parliament, writing in the *Christian News Letter*, described Christianity as "an ascetic religion".

But when all has been said, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the differences between the two religions are more than differences of emphasis. There is a fundamental difference in outlook; in the words of Professor Otto, they "move on different axes". In Hinduism it is only secondarily from sin that deliverance is sought. Primarily it is not merely from time and change, but from evils supposed to be incidental to life in time. This is true even of the great theistic systems. To come back to the two theistic writers whom I have quoted in regard to the sense of sin and the need for deliverance, here first is a passage from Dādu:

The enemy "I" is dead; now none can slay me.  
'Tis I who slay myself: I have died and live.

While the thought of self remains, so long there are two.  
When this selfhood is destroyed, then there is no second.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

And here is Tukārām :

How could we contrive a ferry across the mirage of the world, to cross to the farther side of it? When children play at shop with coins of broken potsherds, what real loss or gain is made in that business? . . . Whatever joy or grief we experience in a dream, when we awake we find it was a false impression. It is false that all are born or dead, or bound or free or suffering.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Macnicol, who writes of *bhakti* religion with an intimacy of knowledge which few if any others possess, has written that "the fellowship of the saints is more precious to Tukārām than any bliss of Nirvāṇa, and so he prays: 'Hear my cry, O God, do not grant me *moksha*' ". But Tukārām's heart and his intellect drew him in different directions. When he thought about it, the world was to him a mirage. But *moksha* was something to be dreaded rather than to be sought or welcomed. The highest that he could imagine was the bliss of fellowship with God and with the company of the *bhaktas*. But this was a bliss which belonged to the temporal order in the same sense as the satisfaction which is to be derived from any other form of worldly experience.

This aversion to the idea of deliverance is frequently referred to as part of the make-up of the natural man. It is told, for example, of Kapila, the reputed founder of the *Sāṅkhya* system, that, moved by compassion for suffering humanity, and wishing to impart to them saving knowledge, he chose as his pupil Āsuri, a Brāhman, who had been a householder for 1,000 years. To test him he asked him whether he delighted in the world. When Āsuri admitted that he did, he sent him back into the world for another thousand years. The same happened a second time. Only at the third time of asking was he found to have acquired a

<sup>1</sup> *The Poems of Tukārām*, Fraser and Marathe, Vol. I, p. 67.

sufficient distaste for the world to fit him for receiving instruction in the *Sāṅkhya*.<sup>1</sup>

I would not give the impression that behind all that has been said and written about deliverance by the exponents of *bhakti* there lies the conviction that final deliverance is really conceived very much as in the *Vedānta*; that the delivered soul is not only freed from *karma* and ceases to migrate, but that, if it continues to exist at all, it is as an impersonal entity, devoid of all qualities. But I would assert emphatically that some such conviction is widely held. The temporal order must dissolve, and like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a rack behind. The true destiny of the soul lies not in the bliss of heaven, or in anything that can be experienced in *saṁsāra*, but in a unity with the Eternal or in an isolation which it is impossible to imagine or characterize. With this point of view the Christian can come to no terms whatsoever. If St. Paul writes: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him", it has to be remembered that he adds: "But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit", and that at the heart of his message lies the fact of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified". The things which He hath prepared for them that love Him are not things in which that love is left behind or transcended, but they are that love itself, with all its fruits passing man's understanding or imagination.

But it may be asserted that these criticisms do not apply equally to every Hindu account of deliverance: that in particular they do not apply to some of the forms of South Indian *Vaiṣṇavism*. It has been claimed that here we have a religion of redemption which is fit to stand alongside Christianity, offering to men a message which is not essen-

<sup>1</sup> Śāstri, *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, p. viii.

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tially different. For this a strong case can be made out, but I feel that it is based on a misapprehension of the nature either of the Christian or the Hindu message, or of both. It is necessary, therefore, to press the comparison a little more closely. I shall take up three features of the doctrine of deliverance in Hinduism and Christianity where the contrast will be found on examination to be impressive.

### (7) SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

#### (a) *Sin and Grace*

Firstly, there is the doctrine of sin and grace. Let me repeat that the Hindu, to whatever school he belongs, believes that there is appointed for men a succession of lives and deaths which they must pass through until deliverance comes. The Christian believes that it "is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment". If he regards death as the great enemy, it is not mere physical dissolution, but the death of the spirit, which is the wages of sin. Sin means separation from God; death means separation, final and complete. I believe this essentially is what is meant in the New Testament by hell. The popular imagination has used the symbolic descriptions of the New Testament, and still more the imagery of the poets, to build a hell conceived in crudely materialistic fashion; and much thought has been unwisely expended in speculations as to what awaits the unrepentant sinner after death. This much is clear from the nature of sin itself and from all New Testament teaching regarding it, that, by sin, a man puts himself outside the family of God, and that sin persisted in may put him outside for ever. The Christian Gospel is the good news of a way of deliverance from sin and death.

Hindu thought at its highest has never treated sin with

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the same seriousness. It has thought of sins rather than of sin, and a limit is set to the significance of each sin by the *karma* idea. Sin does not have for the Hindu the far-reaching significance which it has for the Christian. Nor do we have anything strictly corresponding to the Christian idea of Redemption from sin or of the grace of which it is the expression. Here is a passage from Rāmānuja which sets forth the operation of divine grace:

There is a Supreme Person, whose nature is absolute bliss and goodness; . . . who is an ocean of kindness as it were for all who depend on Him; who is all-merciful; who is immeasurably raised above all possibility of anyone being equal or superior to Him; whose name is the *highest Brahman*. . . . This supreme Lord, when pleased by the faithful worship of His devotees—which worship consists in daily repeated meditation on Him, assisted by the performance of all the practices prescribed for each caste and *āśrama*—frees them from the influence of nescience which consists of *karman* accumulated in the infinite progress of time and hence hard to overcome; allows them to attain to that supreme bliss which consists in the direct intuition of His own true nature; and after that does not turn them back into the miseries of *samsāra*.<sup>1</sup>

But this Supreme Lord is untouched by *kurma*. He is aloof from the affairs of the world, which He created for sport, after the manner of a “great king who has a game at balls”.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to give meaning to the description of Him as “an ocean of kindness”, for it is not a kindness which moves to action. There is no going out to seek and to save that which was lost. As Professor Otto has put it:

His forgiveness is an *overlooking* of the fault out of compassion for the *suffering* of the trouble which the faulty one has drawn down upon himself. It is *indulgentia*, leniency and indulgence, not however the Christian “forgiveness” with its far more profound and even almost mysterious sound.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Vedānta Sūtras with Rāmānuja's Commentary*, IV, 4, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 1, 33.

<sup>3</sup> *India's Religion of Grace*, p. 106.

There is a world of difference in the Christian thought of the infinite cost at which man's salvation was accomplished—through Jesus Christ, “who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate . . . and was crucified also for us”. Here is no *indulgentia*, but redeeming love in action.

(b) *The Redemption of the World*

Secondly, there is a great difference between Christian teaching and the highest Hindu teaching in regard to the range of God's redemptive purpose. God so loved the *world* that He gave His only-begotten Son for its salvation. It is true, individuals must be born again, but His purpose is not fulfilled simply in the conversion of individuals, even a great many of them, but in the redemption of humanity. “We, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3: 13). In Hinduism individuals find deliverance, but we hear nothing of the redemption of society. The social order is certainly very important, and some have wondered how there can be combined together so highly integrated a social system, every part of which has religious sanctions and significance, with a conception of salvation so completely individualistic. The truth is, as we have already seen, that society belongs to the lower, temporal order, and is never effectively integrated with the eternal.

What of the life in the world of those who have found redemption? The Christian Gospel is to be “lived out” in all human relationships. This does not mean the kind of “social Gospel”, in which hedonistic and secular ends are held before men as the objects in which their souls find their true good. It means living in the world without being of it; sharing in the fellowship of the Church which our Lord founded, living

in love to all men and in the practice of all the active virtues that flow from love. It means also seeking to draw men by the attractive power of Christian love into the fellowship which is its home.

It is true Professor Radhakrishnan makes similar claims for Hinduism. Here are his own words:

To be saved is not to be moved from the world. Salvation is not escape from life. The individual works in the cosmic process no longer as an obscure and limited ego, but as a centre of the divine or universal consciousness embracing and transforming into harmony all individual manifestations. . . . The Hindus assert different degrees of liberation, but the complete and final release of all is the ultimate one.<sup>1</sup>

In support of this he gives two references. The first is to a story from *Mahāyāna* Buddhism of how Buddha took the vow never to make the irrevocable crossing so long as there was a single undelivered being on earth. The second is to a prayer from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*:

I desire not the supreme state with all its eight perfections nor the release from re-birth; may I assume the sorrow of all creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief.

These are props too slight for a theory which is at variance with the whole Hindu idea of salvation. Rāmānuja denies the possibility of the existence of a *jīvanmukta*, a soul released in this life.<sup>2</sup> To him, the idea of a released self tied to a body is as self-contradictory as the idea of a childless mother. He emphasizes the teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā* on the performance of the duties of one's caste without regard to the fruit of works. But this has only a disciplinary and preparatory value. Deliverance means a complete break with worldly activity. The other systems which do admit

<sup>1</sup> *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 124 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Vedānta Sūtras with Rāmānuja's Commentary*, I, 1, 4.

the possibility of the existence of a *jīvanmukta* do not represent him as one who goes out with all the powers of his personality heightened through the indwelling of God's Spirit to the loving service of the world. The characterization which Professor Das Gupta gives of the *Vedānta jīvanmukta* is more generally applicable:

For him all world appearance has ceased. He is the one light burning alone in himself where everything else has vanished for ever from the stage.<sup>1</sup>

(c) *Redemption from Futility*

Thirdly, Christian salvation means deliverance from futility, in a way which has no parallel in Hindu teaching. In this connection I would refer to a feature of Hindu thought to which far too little attention has been given, the belief in cyclic recurrence. This belief is by no means peculiar to Hinduism. It has appeared in the West in both Epicurean and Stoic thought, and it has been held by some modern thinkers, including Nietzsche. It is probably best known in its Stoic form, according to which there are world-periods, at the end of each of which the world is taken back into the divine fire from which it came and re-issues in the same form, so that all events are repeated down to the last detail. The Hindu doctrine is slightly different. I give one formulation of it, significantly by the theist Rāmānuja:

When the period of a great *pralaya* draws towards its close, the divine supreme Person, remembering the constitution of the world previous to the *pralaya*, and forming the volition "May I become manifold", separates into its constituent elements the whole mass of enjoying souls and objects of enjoyment, which, during the *pralaya* state had been merged in him so as to possess a separate existence (not actual but) potential only, and then emits the entire world just as it had been before. . . . Having thereupon manifested

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 492.



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the *Vedas* in exactly the same order and arrangement that they had had before, and having taught them to Hiranagarbha, he entrusts to him the new creation of the different classes of beings, gods, and so on. just as it was before.<sup>1</sup>

Similar statements may be found in expositions of the other systems of philosophy, for they all hold the doctrine of *pralaya*, except the *Mīmāṃsā*. For him who has found deliverance it is said there is no return, so it must be presumed that in the renewal of all things at the beginning of each *kalpa* delivered souls are exempted. I am not aware, however, that this is anywhere explicitly stated, and it is difficult to see how the universe can go on "as before" without them. In any case, even if some fortunate souls make good their escape, the world goes on from æon to æon without goal, without meaning, without purpose.

The Christian believes, on the other hand, that the world process is real and that it is purposive. Dr. Micklem has even claimed that "the idea that the process of history reflects a divine purpose and is guided and directed to its end by God is peculiar to the religion of the Bible".<sup>2</sup> Whether this be so or not, there can be no doubt whatever about the centrality of the divine purpose of redemption in the Bible. From one point of view this redemption is an end; from another it is a new beginning; for God has His gracious purposes for man that go on into eternity. St. Paul gives us suggestions for a whole philosophy of history in the great passage in Eph. 1, where, after speaking of the grace of God in our redemption through the blood of Christ, he goes on to speak of His "having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in

<sup>1</sup> *Vedānta Sūtras with Rāmānuja's Commentary*, I, 3, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion*, p. 130.

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heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."

## CHAPTER 6

### TOLERATION: HINDU AND CHRISTIAN

WE are familiar with the claim that Hinduism is the most tolerant of all religions. We may have heard it made in conversation with the assurance that it was axiomatic and incontrovertible. It is much more than a popular belief. It is the conviction of many of those who are best able to interpret the mind of Hindu India from both the political and the philosophical standpoints. Let me give a few quotations to illustrate this.

#### (1) HINDU TOLERANCE

From the political side, here is a statement by Pandit Nehru:

The whole history of India was witness of the toleration and even encouragement of minorities and of different racial groups. There is nothing in Indian history to compare with the bitter religious feuds and persecutions that prevailed in Europe. So we did not have to go abroad for ideas of religious and cultural toleration; these were inherent in Indian life.<sup>1</sup>

Here is the testimony of Mahatma Gandhi:

I do not expect the India of my dream to develop one religion, *i.e.*, to be wholly Hindu, or wholly Christian, or wholly Mussulman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another.<sup>2</sup>

Again:

Believing as I do in the influence of heredity, being born in a Hindu family, I have remained a Hindu. I should reject it if I found it inconsistent with my moral sense or my spiritual growth.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Discovery of India*, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Missions*, p. 186.

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On examination I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me.<sup>1</sup>

Here is an extract from a speech by Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, Dewan of Mysore State:

Ours is a country which has practised through the ages, as no other country in the world has done, the spirit of toleration. This country has never fought religious wars, but has provided a safe habitation for religious refugees who have been persecuted in their own land and has willingly absorbed them into her own population.<sup>2</sup>

Here is the testimony of a philosopher, Professor Radhakrishnan:

Toleration is a duty, not a mere concession. In pursuance of this duty Hinduism has accepted within its fold almost all varieties of belief and doctrine and treated them as authentic expressions of the spiritual endeavour, however antithetic they may appear to be.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, it may be of interest to quote a corroborative remark from a review in an English journal:

The *Bhagavad-gītā*, in A. K. Coomaraswamy's words, is "the focus of all Indian religion", and amply justifies the claim that Hinduism is the most cosmopolitan and tolerant of all religions.<sup>4</sup>

This is impressive testimony, and whatever our final judgment on it may be, the Christian must confess with shame that no corresponding claim can be made on behalf of historical Christianity. Earl Russell goes so far as to say that "historically no great religion has been as persecuting as Christianity".<sup>5</sup> I shall return to the Christian position later; but, for the present, it would seem that a *prima facie* case has been made out for Hinduism as the supreme exponent of the principle of tolerance. Before we accept this as our

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *India News*, August 5, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *The Legacy of India*, p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 28, 1948.

<sup>5</sup> *The Listener*, October 7, 1948.

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final judgment, however, it seems desirable that we should examine the matter a little more closely.

### (2) WHAT IS TOLERATION?

In the Dictionaries, "forbearance" is given as the nearest equivalent to toleration. It is behaviour of which one does not approve that calls for toleration or forbearance. Historically, social groups have not arrived naturally or easily at the point at which it has appeared safe to allow within themselves practices or beliefs at variance with those of the community. At first this was not strictly a matter of religion, for the secular and the sacred were not sharply discriminated. The safety of the group depended on the members acting together, and what we would call "religious" ceremonial entered into all their common action. Non-conformity at any point would be simple disloyalty to the group, and it could not be tolerated.

This is an attitude which, in its essentials, has persisted in societies which have advanced far beyond the stage which can properly be described as primitive. Totalitarian governments in our own day have sought to bring under control every department of the life of the individuals who come under their rule, and there is no ground for hope that this tendency will quickly come to an end. It seems to point to something persisting in the mind of civilized man which has roots that go even deeper than primitive human propensities, and belong to the instinctive life of the gregarious lower animals.

The fact that the primitive group prescribes the way of life in which its members are to walk does not mean that no other way of life is recognized. Other groups have other ways. These may be regarded with horror and aversion or with indifference, but in either case as the ways of another

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group. Different groups might have their own deities, obedience to whose laws was the condition of their protection. The Syrians, for example, saw in the Israelites a people with different ways and different gods from their own. "Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they" (1 Kings 20: 23). This has its relevance to the statement which one sometimes hears that it is of the nature of polytheism to be tolerant. Actually this is an ambiguous and doubtful statement. The question of tolerance does not arise at all so long as divinity is thought of as simply multitudinous. Polytheism is in its nature neither tolerant nor intolerant, but it may develop into or be superseded by a henotheistic, or a monotheistic or a monistic religion where the question of toleration takes on a new meaning.

### (3) DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

In India, as we have seen, it was in the monistic direction that religion developed. But this did not mean that the old beliefs and practices were dropped, and that their place was taken by a highly philosophical religion. The concept of the unity of reality never came to serve as an organizing principle by reference to which the lives of men in every part of society were given meaning and direction. Alongside the most profound philosophical thinking there persisted the most primitive cults and social customs. They were not simply left untouched by the thought of the philosophers; they were explained and justified and given authority, so that a rigid frame-work of group custom continued to restrict the activities of the individual. It was primarily to the community and not to the individual that toleration was shown.

In the light of this we may look again at what Mahatma

Gandhi said about his desire that India should be "wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with each other". To the Western reader who has learned a little about the finer elements in non-Christian religions this may appear to be the high-water mark of tolerance. But when Mahatma Gandhi used these words he was not thinking only or indeed specially of the higher religions. He believed in the equality of all religions, including what we should regard as the most primitive. Here are words of his own regarding some of the most primitive forms of religion practised in India:

What have I to take to the aborigines and the Assamese hillmen except to go in my nakedness to them? Rather than ask them to join in my prayer, I would join their prayer. We were strangers to this sort of classification—"animists", "aborigines", etc., but we have learnt it from the English rulers.<sup>1</sup>

This does not mean that all distinctions of higher and lower in religion and morality are abolished; it does not mean that the duty of rendering service to those of other religions who are less privileged than ourselves is abolished. But it means something else which is important for an understanding of the nature of Hinduism. Let me explain a little.

I have already spoken of the fact that in Hinduism the socio-religious community to which one belongs is supposed to be irrevocably fixed. This means that no one can pass from one community to another, and that the idea of conversion from one religion to another is regarded with horror. Mahatma Gandhi shared this horror.

We can only pray, if we are Hindus, not that a Christian should become a Hindu, or if we are Mussalmans, not that a Hindu or a Christian should become a Mussalman, nor should we even secretly pray that any one should be converted, but our inmost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Missions*, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

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So strongly did he feel this that he would have been prepared to support legislation to prevent conversion.

If I had power and could legislate, I should certainly stop all proselytizing.<sup>1</sup>

Let it be remembered that this was the point of view of a deeply religious man. There are among ourselves religious men who see the elements of good in all religions, who are impressed with what other religions at their best have done for their adherents, and who are unwilling to tamper with men's loyalty to their own religion. There are still more irreligious men—men to whose secular purposes, political or commercial, religion is unhelpful or irrelevant—who realize that religion is nevertheless a phenomenon which, however inconvenient or distasteful it may be, cannot be ignored. They stand, therefore, for the *laissez faire* policy of Gallio. Mahatma Gandhi's position was different from both of these. It was in essentials the traditional Hindu position. It was expressed in his remarks which I have already quoted about "*varṇa-dharma* being the law of life", and in his question: "Why should my son not be a scavenger if I am one?"<sup>2</sup>

This is certainly essential Hinduism. Many modern Hindus have travelled a long way from the doctrines laid down in their ancient Scriptures, but they are still influenced by them, and the general pattern of social life remains unchanged. In the cities there has been a considerable relaxation of the restrictions governing social relationships, as has been said in an earlier chapter, but life is still hedged about with rules to an extent that in the West would be unthinkable. Caste is still separated from caste by many restrictions, and between all Caste Hindus and the Untouchables there is still a great gulf fixed. Excommunication from

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.



caste, with the social ostracism that this involves, is still practised, and the fate of the excommunicated is an unenviable one. The Hindu who embraces another religious faith by his very act unfits himself for the performance of duties incumbent on a member of a family and of a community, and he loses his place in both. One does not have to live long in India before discovering how powerful are the feelings of revulsion with which even advanced Hindus regard the conversion of a fellow-Hindu to Christianity, or to any other religion.

What is even more surprising is the resentment which has come to be felt at the conversion of members of the Untouchable classes. There was a time even within my own memory when it was commonly believed that the Untouchables were not Hindus at all. They had an essential place in the social structure. They were needed for the performance of certain necessary tasks which a Hindu could not perform without defilement. But their faithful performance of these duties brought them no honour. They suffered, and, in spite of new legislative protection, they still suffer, grave disabilities. There was a time when no one seemed to be seriously perturbed by the fact that large numbers of them had begun to find their way into the Christian Church. I still recall the amused contempt manifested by a well-known Hindu leader nearly forty years ago at the idea of these simple people becoming Christians. He said the Christians might as well receive monkeys into their fold, for these people were no better than monkeys. All this has changed. They are now accepted as Hindus and a general concern has grown up for the recognition of their place within the Hindu structure. In support of this principle, Mahatma Gandhi undertook one of his historic fasts, and he succeeded in securing that, while they were granted separate political

representation, they were granted this as a group within the greater Hindu community. Recently legislation has been passed for the removal of the injustices under which they have continued to suffer, but many of the worst injustices are social and beyond the reach of legislation. The common Hindu resentment of efforts to convert them to Christianity was shared by Mahatma Gandhi. He said of missionaries and Christian workers:

They dangle earthly Paradises in front of them and make promises to them which they can never keep. When in Bangalore a deputation of Indian Christians came to me with a number of resolutions which they thought would please me. I said to them: "This is no matter for bargain. You must say definitely that this is a matter to be settled by the Hindus themselves. Where is the sense of talking of a sudden awakening of spiritual hunger among the untouchables and then trying to exploit a particular situation? The poor Harijans have no mind, no intelligence, no sense of difference between God and no God. It is absurd for a single individual to talk of taking all the Harijans with himself. Are they all bricks that they can be moved from one structure to another? If Christian Missions here want to play the game, and for that matter Mussalmans and others, they should have no such idea as that of adding to their ranks whilst a great reform in Hinduism is going on."<sup>1</sup>

#### (4) LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM

It is many years since some of the Indian States began to pass legislation with regard to conversion. One of the most recent Acts was that passed in Patna State in 1942, with the title of "The Patna State Freedom of Religion Act". It provided among other things that every person desiring to become a convert to another religion should before doing so present himself before a Registrar (a Magistrate) and sign a statement on oath setting forth the circumstances. If the Registrar should find that "fraud, intimidation, coercion or

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Missions*, pp. 207 f.

undue influence" had been exercised, even by a husband on a wife or by a wife on a husband, the guilty persons were subject to heavy penalties. The disposal of children, where one or both parents were converted, was left to the determination of the Registrar. Patna is a comparatively obscure State, but the Act won a certain notoriety because of the definiteness of the obstacles which it put in the way of conversion. Firstly, for a poor person there were the unknown terrors of an appearance before a magistrate. Then, as some influence must have been at work to lead him to seek conversion, there was the question of what might be regarded as undue influence, and if this should be proved there were the heavy penalties to which all concerned were liable. Lastly, there was the fate of the children, who were liable to be separated from their parents even if both of them sought conversion.

Still more significant as showing trends in the new India are certain clauses in the Central Provinces and Berar Public Safety Act 1947, now rescinded. I quote some of the provisions:

#### Chapter VII—Offences

12. Whoever in circumstances likely to disturb the public peace takes or entices a woman of a caste or community other than his own, or compels or induces her to go from any place where she ordinarily resided immediately before such aforesaid act, or restrains, confines or retains such woman otherwise than for immediately restoring her to her ordinary place of residence, or attempts or abets such taking, enticing, abduction, restraint or confinement or retention, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine.

13. (1) No person shall convert another person from that person's religious faith to his own except in the presence of the District Magistrate or Sub-Divisional Magistrate. . . .

13. (5) Whoever converts or attempts or abets to convert another person in contravention of this section shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to seven years and shall be liable to fine.

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I understand that this Act was aimed in the first instance not at Christian missionary activity, but at certain offences alleged to have been committed by Mohammedans in the recent disturbances. There were widespread allegations of forcible conversion, and of the abduction of Hindus, particularly of Hindu women, for this purpose. One can well understand the desire to have protective legislation, if the existing law did not give the necessary protection. But the Act was general in its scope, and its provisions went far beyond what the special need demanded. There was the requirement that conversion must take place before a magistrate. There was the inclusion of inducement among the penal offences, and this is a term so wide that it might have been construed to apply to the most innocent offer of asylum to a conscientious enquirer. The qualification that the offence must be committed "in circumstances likely to disturb the public peace" had little value, for any conversion might be made an occasion for a disturbance of the peace. But lying behind these details there is something which has even greater significance; I mean the whole conception of the private and the public implications of religion. To this I must turn for a little now.

### (5) "A SECULAR DEMOCRATIC STATE"

Before the transference of power in India, the Indian National Congress had accepted as its ideal the establishment of a "secular democratic state". This has been a dominating idea in the preparation of the constitution. The term is continually on the lips of the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, and I believe it represents something which he personally feels deeply in his heart. Actually it is as impossible for a state as it is for an individual to refrain from

adopting some attitude to ultimate things. There are states with a religious, and states with an anti-religious, basis. The term "secular" seems to suggest the exclusion of religion. But this is not intended. What is really intended is that no particular form of religious profession or observance should be imposed on the citizens by the state. But the whole structure rests on the assumption that every citizen belongs hereditarily to some socio-religious community. This is a fact that has caused Indian political leaders considerable embarrassment and will continue to do so. On the one hand, there is a sincere desire that the constitution should be truly democratic; that no individual should be placed at any disadvantage because of his ancestry or his social affiliations; and generally that communalism should be kept out of politics. On the other hand, caste is there, and its influence is all-pervasive. The fullest liberty is given to all castes in following their social and religious practices. In accordance with this policy they have continued to offer to Christians and Muslims liberty and protection in the observance of the requirements of their religion. What they have failed to grasp is the fact that neither Christianity nor Islam fits into the scheme. Both claim to have a message not only for their own members but for the world. Both likewise have a basis of membership which is not primarily hereditary but voluntary. Many of my Hindu friends find it impossible to think of any community except as a static body. In particular, they do not find it easy to understand the conception of a brotherhood like the Church, transcending nationality and race, into the fellowship of which in the name of their Lord Christians invite all men.

There is here a real tension, which will not be easily overcome. On the one side are those whose minds are most faithfully represented by the Hindu Mahasabha, who are

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definitely thinking in terms of a Hindu state. Multitudes of Hindu people who never heard of the Mahasabha and who never took any active part in political planning, have had their thoughts and emotions so conditioned through the operation of social influences that they implicitly support the same position. On the other side there are those who believe with all their hearts in a personal freedom which has not usually been found compatible with a Hindu state. Some of them believe that they have got their inspiration from Hindu sources, but undoubtedly the determinative influences have come from Western thought and practice. But whatever may have been the source of the inspiration, there is great hope in the fact that it has been found possible to include in the draft Constitution of India a clause guaranteeing religious freedom. It is as follows:

Part III, 19 (1). Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.

The last phrase was admitted only after prolonged discussion, and the issue was for long in doubt. But its acceptance gives ground for hope that what legislation can do for the protection of the freedom of the individual will be done.

If one wants further assurance that this attitude represents what is best in the mind of Hindu India, he will find it in a message which the Governor-General, Mr. Rajagopalachari, sent to the Malabar Christian College on the occasion of its centenary. Here are some sentences from it:

We have a special reason to be grateful to Christian Missionary Colleges. Christian Missionary institutions were spearheads of attack on Hindu complacency and self-righteousness. The attack was unpleasant at the time, but it broadened our vision and helped the present-day Hindus to see the purport of their own old Scriptures more correctly than they had done before. Many things

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that are obvious now would not have been so obvious had we been allowed to go to rust without external criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the true spirit of toleration, the spirit that permits and encourages free enquiry.

### (6) THE CHRISTIAN POSITION

I have already said that no claim can be made for Christianity that it has consistently practised tolerance. To this point I must now return, for I believe that the most truly representative Christians believe tolerance to belong to the very essence of the Christian message. We are convinced that whatever intolerance has characterized the spirit and the actions of the Church in any of its parts in the past has been in manifest violation of the spirit and example and teaching of our Lord. By this standard we judge what has been done in the name of the Church in former times; and by it we would seek to determine what is its duty and the duty of its members now.

It may be helpful to recall some simple things in the teaching and practice of our Lord which are relevant to this subject. The most significant incident recorded in the Gospels is that in which He rebuked His disciples for asking Him to call down fire from heaven to destroy the hostile Samaritans. I am aware that the words attributed to Him: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them", are not found in the original text. But, however they found their way there, they are expressive of the spirit of our Lord. It comes out in His teaching and practice regarding forgiveness, and most notably in His prayer for those who crucified Him. In the parable of the tares He taught that it is not for men to uproot the impenitent sinner, but that he must be

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The National Christian Council Review*, February, 1949.

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left to the sure judgment of God. He is a God infinitely merciful and patient, "making His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust".

This does not mean any indifference to moral distinctions, or to distinctions of religious belief. But it does mean the assertion of certain judgments as to the way in which the cause of righteousness and truth is to be maintained. The Gospels contain few of the abstract nouns which have so large a place in our discussions. For example, there is no mention of "humanity" or "individuality" or "personality," or of "tolerance" itself. But there is something even more significant. There is the treatment of every man and woman as a child of God—it may be an erring and disobedient child, but still a child, and not a slave, subject to the constant correction of the lash of a cruel master. Sin and error have terrible consequences, but when we begin to try to purge the world of them by measures of repression we inevitably fail. In trying to prevent men from doing evil, we in some measure unfit them for doing good. Our Lord recognized the need for civil government and for agencies for the restraint of that lawlessness by which men obstruct the freedom of their neighbours. But the terrors of the law can never make bad men good. Our Lord showed the world a better way, that of overcoming evil with good.

This, however, is not the main issue in our study of the place of tolerance in Christianity and Hinduism. Far more important in practice is the attitude taken to intellectual, social and religious loyalties other than one's own. No religious teacher ever made such stupendous claims for himself as Jesus did. He represented Himself as the fulfilment of the prophecies and hopes of the Old Testament; he claimed authority to abrogate the old Jewish Law, and to lay down a new Law for men; He sought of men a loyalty to His own



person which for some of them meant forsaking all and following Him; He made the most exclusive claims for the significance of His death and resurrection. It is not uncommon for people at the present time to regard the making of such high and exclusive claims, or the reassertion of them by Christ's followers, as in itself a manifestation of intolerance. But this is obviously a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the word. There can be no intolerance in declaring what one believes to be true and inviting the free assent of others.

Our Lord never sought to secure loyalty to Himself or acceptance of the truth of His message by means other than spiritual. It has sometimes been said that this was because such other means were not available to Him, but this is not true. One of the temptations which He rejected at the beginning of His ministry was that of making an alliance with the powers of the world. He knew, what His followers have been slow to learn, that the truth itself becomes perverted when alien means are employed to force it on men's minds. Further, He might have used those subtle methods of social pressure which have often been used by sects with little political influence—methods of denunciation and ridicule and social ostracism. It has been said that these actually were the methods which He used with the Pharisees, but this is a mistake. They were a party with great prestige and influence, and what He did was with supreme courage to tell them frankly what manner of men they really were.

With our Lord, tolerance meant much more than mere abstention from the use of unworthy means to secure acceptance of His message. It meant that courtesy and considerateness both to individuals and to groups which are possible only when one has a deep understanding of and sympathy with the minds of people of very different tem-

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peraments and with very different backgrounds. One thinks of three incidents recorded in the Gospels, each of which reveals in its own way this spirit. There is, firstly, the conversation with the woman of Samaria, in which through His perfect tact He won the sympathy not only of the woman but of other members of that traditionally hostile community. There is, secondly, the incident of the Roman centurion, of whom our Lord said that he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And there is, thirdly, the incident of the Syro-Phenician woman, who desired to share in the crumbs that fell from the children's table. Without the slightest suggestion of coercion three different types of people came under His spell.

Our Lord's attitude must be normative for Christians and for the Church. When it has been abandoned, as it was for long periods by the Church in almost all its denominations, it has been to the grave detriment of the life of the Church, and to the misrepresentation of the Gospel to those who are without. St. Augustine's mistaken interpretation of our Lord's words, "Compel them to come in", as warranting persecution, opened the door to all kinds of iniquities—to "religious" wars, to the horrors of the Inquisition, and to the persecution of minorities in many lands, in the name of the Christian faith. There are parts of the Church which have not yet completely disavowed these ways. Mr. A. C. F. Beales, who describes the Church as "the stronghold of human freedom",<sup>1</sup> quotes with approval Douglas Jerrold's characterization of the Christian State as "a state which, while tolerant of men in error, is not tolerant of error as such".<sup>2</sup> The distinction is a subtle one, for far too often states which have had the power have sought to uproot

<sup>1</sup> *The Catholic Church and International Order*, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

“error” by striking at the man who upholds or propagates it. Father Knox seems to approve of this policy, for he says that “the faith which is strong enough to make martyrs is strong enough to make persecutors”.<sup>1</sup>

Actually this policy must fail to make or to keep people truly Christian. All opposition to a secular loyalty may for a time be silenced, if it be suppressed with sufficient ruthlessness. But no one can be brought to Christ by Act of Parliament, whatever sanctions may be used to enforce it. Unless men are won to Christ by His own winsomeness they cannot be won at all.

#### (7) TOLERATION IN A CHRISTIAN STATE

But I would not give the impression that toleration means simply recognition of the freedom of the individual. Religion is not a purely private possession; it is not just the relationship of the individual soul to God. It is that, but it is also a social bond. For example, the Christian family is one of the finest fruits of Christianity, and it is in turn the environment in which some of the most distinctive Christian virtues find expression. It is a very modern and a very mistaken idea of tolerance that in the interests of individual freedom would object to family religion. What applies to the family applies within limits to the state. I have already referred to the idea of a “secular state”, and have pointed out that it is impossible for the state to refrain from adopting some attitude to ultimate things. Under British guidance the policy of the Government of India was one of neutrality in religion. This may seem to many people to be a sound policy; but it is not so simple in practice as it at first sight appears to be. According to the spirit of the administering officials, it might be interpreted to mean: (a) that all religions were to be equally

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Cadoux, *Roman Catholicism and Freedom*, p. 59.

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discouraged; (b) that all were to be equally encouraged; or, (c) that there was some implied standard of valuation according to which special favour was shown to one religion over others. I have seen all these tendencies in operation.

With the background of the varied traditions which have been brought into the United States, and with a view to the harmonious co-operation of the groups which follow them, Professor Bates commends a policy which has strong points of resemblance to that of the Government of India. He would give no preference to any religion, but would allow all of them a fair field and no favour, subject only to the interests of public order and morals. He finds the ideal in an alliance of Christians with "believers of other faiths high in ethical and spiritual import".<sup>1</sup> Actually, in the name of so-called religious freedom, it is easier to legislate for a state in which all spiritual values are ignored than to attempt to provide for the conservation of what is best in all of them.<sup>2</sup> There is a whole multitude of things in which Christians can co-operate with people of other religions and of no religion, but there are matters in regard to which acceptance of the policy of the "highest common factor" can be acceptable to no party. Our own country may be far from being truly Christian, but there are customs and sentiments that would not have been there if in times past the corporate life of the people had not been touched by the influence of the Gospel. It may be claimed that the conscience of the nation still remains Christian. For example, there is a general desire for the national acknowledgment and worship of God on important public occasions. There is the desire that children should receive a Christian education, and there is the desire that the

<sup>1</sup> *Religious Liberty*, M. Searle Bates, p. 556.

<sup>2</sup> A recent decision of the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. seems to have supported this negative interpretation.

Christian ethic should be applied in public and private life.

I venture to think that in such a state there is a surer guarantee of freedom both for individuals and for groups which do not conform than in purely secular states. Toleration which is offered on any lower ground than the Christian is always precarious; for example, the toleration which rests on lack of conviction. Here, for example, is a statement taken from a quite good book on Christian ethics:

Tolerance is the recognition that others may as well be in the right as oneself, and a readiness, or even eagerness, to believe that they are.<sup>1</sup>

The writer is not an agnostic; he is a convinced Christian; and I cannot believe he realized the implications of the language which he used. Out of the absence of conviction no true tolerance can come; at the best only a working arrangement, which must be uncertain and precarious, because it rests on no principle.

Slightly different is a familiar modern point of view, well put by Morley in these words:

Tolerance means reverence for all the possibilities of truth; it means acknowledgment that she dwells in diverse mansions, and wears vesture of many colours, and speaks in strange tongues.<sup>2</sup>

This is essentially the same point of view as that of Professor Radhakrishnan. It is a theory which provides a better support for tolerance than the former one, but still I believe it to be unsatisfactory. We need not believe that the atheist has got hold of some neglected phase of truth in order that we may tolerate him. We may believe that he is flatly wrong. Locke, believing this, laid it down that:

<sup>1</sup> *The Way of Life*, Barker, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Gladstone*, Vol. I, p. 771.

## TWO RELIGIONS

... these are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of God. Promises, covenants and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold on an atheist.<sup>1</sup>

Even if one agrees with Locke in his judgment on the practical outcome of atheism, one is not committed to the view that the best way to deal with the atheist is to suppress or persecute him. Professor Niebuhr has said truly that "truth is bound to be suppressed with the suppression of error".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Oman has put the case in other words:

We should approve the conscientiousness of others, even when we do not approve the verdicts of their consciences. True toleration only begins when we think the verdict is wrong but still recognize that everyone should walk by his own conscience, and not by ours.<sup>3</sup>

We are living in a period in which human liberty is being threatened from various quarters. The older people among us were ill-prepared for this development, and many of the younger people are bewildered by it. They realize the need for both discipline and freedom, and they are prepared to examine with fresh eyes any and every scheme designed to secure them. In the study which lies behind these Lectures the subject has arisen incidentally, but so insistently that it could not be ignored. The claim that Hinduism is the most tolerant of all religions had to be examined. The toleration that it has extended to varied groups of people in the following of their distinctive ways is something that we must appreciate. But Hinduism does not provide a framework within which individuals of every community can find the freedom which is needed for the realization of the truest manhood. My claim is that it is in a Christian society—a society permeated by the mind of Christ—that the spirit of

<sup>1</sup> *Toleration*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Human Destiny*, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> *The Natural and the Supernatural*, p. 316.

## TOLERATION: HINDU AND CHRISTIAN

tolerance finds its best expression. It was as men began to re-discover the mind of Christ that ideas of tolerance took root in the West: and our hope for a world delivered from tyranny and fear is bound up with the hope that in all lands men will put themselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, who invites them freely to come unto Him, but who will have no unwilling subjects.

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